



*Mikhail Soloviev*

WHEN THE  
GODS  
ARE  
SILENT

*A Ladder Edition at the  
2,000-Word Level*

Adapted by ADOLPH MYERS

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## How the Surovs Became Reds

LIKE ALL THE VILLAGE peasant women of the *steppes* of southern Russia, Vera Ivanovna went about her work so steadily, and bundled up in so much clothing, that until the new baby was born no one, except perhaps her husband Timothy Surov, even knew that it was on the way.

To have yet another baby, the nineteenth, at the age of fifty, was not a thing a woman would want to boast about among the neighbors. Even if she had been ten years younger there would still have been much raising of eyebrows and shaking of heads. But was it her fault, Vera reasoned, if God did not forget her and sent her baby after baby?

"Am I to be blamed?" she asked quietly, looking up at her surprised sons as they stood unsmiling in a circle around her and her baby. "Only God knows what is to be."

"We don't mind your having another baby, Mamma," said Jacob, the eldest son, himself thirty-five years old. "Go on till you've had twenty or more. We're only thinking of the way people will laugh."

It was a hot summer's day, with plenty of work to be done on the farm, and Timothy did not go to see his youngest son, in the shed where Vera still lay on the straw, until late in the afternoon. Timothy was a heavily built man, as strong as an ox, with his face covered up to the eyes with a thick growth of beard. Bending down he kissed his wife tenderly, and with one finger stroked the baby's head.

Vera gave him a look of gratitude. "Our sons are angry. I am an old woman and I am still having children. I prayed to Saint Mark to keep me from child, but my prayer didn't reach him."

"In this matter our sons are not the law," said Surov angrily. "God knows better than us. As was Saint

Mark you prayed to we'll call this one Mark. We haven't had a Mark yet, have we?"

In the evening Vera Ivanovna walked across the yard carrying a bundle from which came loud baby cries. The house was to have yet one more inhabitant.

It was an old house. Through the dark little windows which looked out on the dusty village street, it had seen many things in its time. Like most of the other houses in the village it was divided into two parts: one was the kitchen and living-room, in which most of the family slept; in the other lived the rest of the household. More than half of the kitchen was taken up by a great stove.

By the time Mark could make his own way from one part of the house to the other he knew that the family consisted of his father, mother, nine brothers and two sisters. Of the eighteen children born before him seven had died.

Under the same roof lived another branch of the family. Simon, the third son, was married and had a seven-year-old child named Peter. When Vera Ivanovna first brought Mark into the house and put him in a bed, Simon led his son up to the bed and said to him, "Peter, have a look at your uncle."

"Where's my uncle?" questioned Peter.

"Why, here in the bed."

"But how can he be my uncle when he's so small?" the boy protested.

Jacob had been married too, but his wife had died two years after the marriage, and he had not taken another one. Sergei, aged twenty-nine, and Dmitri, twenty-four, should have been wed long before, but somehow they had missed getting married. Kornei, at sixteen, was about the right age, but no girl would have accepted him, so quarrelsome was his nature, so violent his temper. After him came Gregory, Philip and Taras. Then the two girls—Olga and Tatiana—and lastly, Ivan, only two years older than Mark.

In the years both before and after Mark came into the world Nature was not kind to the peasants of the steppes. For one reason or another every crop failed, and each fall there was nothing or very little to harvest. When there was no other way of keeping their families alive the farmers had to sell their land to the few rich landowners who still had money, and then rent it back from them as

tenants. Some farmers had already lost everything; others were on their way to complete poverty.

Timothy Surov was one of those who had already lost everything. Many years before Mark was born he had owned cattle, horses and land. To keep them he had worked hard enough for three men, but one crop failure after another forced him to sell everything. When only the old house was left he went off to work in the local town and got a job on the railroad. There he labored for ten years, saving as much of his pay as he could in order to be able to buy back his land. But for the events of 1905 he would have succeeded.

In that year a number of strikes and armed revolts swept over Russia. In the railway depot where he worked *revolutionary* leaders made speeches calling on the workers to fight against the rule of the Czar. After listening to one of them Surov pushed his way up to the railroad engine from which the man was speaking.

"How about the land?" Timothy asked.

"The land has got to be handed over to the peasants," was the answer. "We shall take it from the landowners and the wealthy class."

That was good enough for Timothy Surov. When, on that same day, there was a procession of workers through the town he marched at its head, carrying a big red board on which were the words: "The land to the peasants!"

The procession was broken up by the police. Surov was beaten, arrested, and sent back to his village with a court order that he was not to leave it. After that he lived the ordinary life of a poor peasant. To provide food for his family he worked for the local landowner, or took any work that was offered to him. However by the time Mark was about seven years old, the seven older sons were all working. Things would have been better, but for the war with Germany which started in 1914.

Toward the end of 1914 came a call from the government in Moscow for five of the oldest sons, who were of military age, to fight for their country. All were immediately sent to the *front*, and it was not long before bad news started to come back through the office of the local authorities. First, it was Jacob—"killed in the service of the Faith, the Czar, and the Fatherland." Then it was Sergei, also killed. Then it was Simon. He was not killed, but he had lost an arm, and being unwilling to add to his



father's difficulties he decided to disappear somewhere on the way back.

The Surov family was only one of hundreds of thousands of Russian families that suffered in this way. As more and more fathers and sons were killed or wounded, and more and more men were sent off to take their places at the front, murmurs of discontent began to rise from the hungry people. They began to ask questions. What was the war all about? Who wanted it? Why did it not come to an end? The murmur began to swell into a roar. Soon rumors were spreading: the army was refusing to fight. One word, "Revolution," was on everybody's lips.

As the war dragged on from day to day the Surov house seemed to grow not only older but sadder, more quiet and more dead. Then, one day in the winter of 1916-1917, the house suddenly came alive again. Mark was sitting on the garden wall, looking down on the street, when a light carriage drawn by two horses pulled up at the gate. Out stepped two men in uniform. One of them, carrying a rifle, came towards the boy.

"Don't you know me, Mark?" he cried.

It was Kornei, the fourth of Mark's soldier brothers, and with him was Dmitri, the fifth.

Mark ran shouting into the house, "Kornei has come home. And he's got a gun!"

As a boy Kornei had been the terror of the village. Because the family was poor and he was unsure of himself, he had felt that every unfriendly word was an insult. He fought someone on every possible occasion and caused much trouble. Many times he had been severely whipped by his enraged father, but nothing seemed to make him any better.

Now, however, Kornei seemed to have developed much greater self-confidence. The first evening after his return he made a kind of speech to a group of the villagers. From his words Mark understood that the army had brought the war to an end by refusing to fight, that all power had been taken from the Czar, and that the people themselves would in future be governing Russia. And he said a lot about the land, which was to be handed over to the peasants.

A few days later the one-armed Simon came back. He had spent two years in Moscow, and he too was a revolutionary. The Surov house became a meeting place for all



Surov had waved at his son. Kornei laughed too, but not without a look of anxiety on his face.

Finally it was agreed that the new village Soviet should take over authority, with all due ceremony, on a certain day in the following week.

When the day came, the village head, who had been appointed by the old government, dressed himself in his best clothes and pinned a red ribbon on his shirt front. He also insisted that the village policeman should dress up in full uniform and wear his official sword.

When the long procession of front-line men and peasants, led by a group of singers, went to the village square, the priest sprinkled holy water over the leaders and also, as an afterthought, over the machine-gun which Kornei had quite illegally brought home with him from the war. Then the procession moved on to the house of the village administration. There, on the front steps, were assembled all the officials who had been paid by the old government: the headman himself, the policeman, the village secretary, several watchmen from the grain-tax storehouses, and the doctor. The headman held in his hands the enormous key to the house and his shiny badge of office.

Kornei drew himself up to his full height and spoke to the village head and his group:

"Well now, citizens, the old authority is being swept away and a new one, elected by the people, is being put in its place. And if you resist we'll strike you down at once."

"What makes you say that, Kornei?" the headman replied hastily. "Why should we resist? Take the authority, damn it! Here's the key, here's the badge, take the lot!"

But it was Simon who, as head of the new village Soviet, took over the key and the badge. Everybody cheered, the village head loudest of all.

Then the policeman stepped to the front. He unfastened his sword and took off his uniform, trousers and all. His wife was to have been there ready with a change of clothes, but some of the front-line men held her back, as a joke, and the policeman stood in his underclothes, amid loud laughter from the crowd, until they let her go to him.

Now it was the secretary's turn. Laying his big accountbook on the cart on which the revolutionary leaders were standing he explained solemnly: "Income in the first part, expenditure in the second part." But as there

was no one else in the village who could read and write well enough to do his work, it was decided by the crowd to keep him, and he took his place behind the members of the Soviet.

What to do with the doctor was also a problem. The front-line men wanted to put in his place a handsome young soldier named Mitka, who had served as a medical *orderly* in the army. But the village women objected strongly, and in the end it was decided to keep the doctor and make Mitka his assistant, with instructions to see that the workers always got proper treatment.

Two days later the peasants went out into the steppe to divide up the land. All the land, including that belonging to the landowner and the Church, was to be divided into shares, according to the number of mouths in each family. The Surovs received a very large amount of land, more than they had ever owned in their history. Timothy handed back part of it in favor of the men with small families, and others followed his example. The landowner was allowed to have as much land as he and his family could themselves cultivate, for it was strictly forbidden to hire laborers. But when representatives of the Revolutionary Committee visited the landowner, to explain what had been done, he said angrily:

"You've stolen my land from me. You will return it all to me and throw yourselves at my feet, asking for mercy, before we are finished."

Turning on his heel he marched back into his house.

And that was how they made a revolution in the Surov village.

## Chapter 2

# The Bloodbath Begins

WITH THE SEIZURE OF power and the sharing out of the land, people thought that the revolution had come to an end; but it was just beginning. For in November came the second revolution, the Communist Revolution, and now all the talk was of Lenin and the *Bolsheviks*. And with

that talk there also came reports of resistance to the Reds as the communists were called, by Russians of a different political color—the "Whites." There were reports of actual fighting, brother against brother. The idea of *civil war* became first a possibility, then a probability, then a certainty.

"Are they coming?" Timothy Surov would anxiously ask Simon or Kornei.

"Yes, they're coming," would be the heavy-hearted reply.

Everyone was expecting trouble, and in the end it came. It reached the village from the neighboring Don and Kuban Cossack areas. A large force of Whites, led by General Pokrovsky, marched into the steppe and savagely began to put down the peasant *revolt*, sparing no one. With them they carried a list of names, which was printed and put up on telegraph poles, of all the people who were to be hanged as soon as they fell into the hands of the Whites. Among the twenty-six names were those of three of the Surovs—Kornei, Simon, and old Timothy himself.

There was much excitement and discussion in the village. The question was whether an attempt should be made to defend it against Pokrovsky's Whites, or whether the people should leave it and move on to some other place. At last, when the Whites were already very close, Simon's view was accepted—that the fighting men should leave, to avoid the risk of being wiped out, but their families should stay.

"I know it's hard to part from our wives and children," said Simon, "but what can we do? After all, the Whites are Russians like us, and they won't harm the women and the children. We fighting men must retreat to the Sands of Astrakhan, to the Kalmuk Steppe, and there assemble our forces. . . ."

Kornei's small *troop* of men slipped out of the village during the night, taking with them Timothy and two of the younger Surov brothers, Philip and Taras. Of the family only Ivan and Mark and the four women—Vera Ivanovna, Simon's wife Barbara, Olga and Tatiana—remained behind. With all of the young men gone, fear settled down on every house.

The Whites entered the village the next evening. At first they seemed friendly and courteous, and those left in the village breathed a sigh of relief. After all, there was



passed several bodies hanging from poles in the village square.

That day, for the first time, Mark learned how terrible life could be, and how weak a person was in the face of such horrors. That day he ceased to be a child; his burning sorrow for his mother had pushed him into manhood.

When, after many days of illness, Vera Ivanovna felt sufficiently better she sat down to work at the sewing machine, making clothing for the peasant women of the village to feed her family. Tatiana was a great help to her, but as there was nothing for Olga to do she went off to live in a neighboring village, to spare the family the difficulty of finding food for her. For the two boys, Ivan and Mark, there was also nothing to do. The yard was empty, the garden produce was gathered, autumn was approaching, and they did not feel like playing with their friends.

The Whites carried off all the grain they could find. The peasants had to manage as best they could. And for the Surovs it was a very hard and bitter time. Their mother received such a small return for her work that she found it impossible to feed the two boys properly. Seeing that she was terribly worried, they too went off. Ivan was given work by a rich peasant, looking after his horses, and Mark went to work with the shepherds in the steppe, helping to look after the sheep. Thus the old house lost three more of its family.

In that summer of 1918 Mark spent two months on the open steppe, herding sheep, until his skin was burnt black and his hair was bleached white by the sun. In those vast level spaces—seemingly endless, silent under a high still sky—all human troubles seem unimportant. Left alone with nature, man begins to feel that he has got away from the troubles that torture him. So it was with Mark. All he had left behind in the village, in the old house, began to seem like a dream. Only his thoughts of his mother were constant and warm. Every night, as he fell asleep, he thought of her sitting bent over the sewing machine and sewing, sewing, sewing.

Despite the longing to see his mother, and despite the hard work which he had to do, Mark would have been well content to have gone on living on the steppe from one day to the next, with no thought for the future. But it was not to be. From time to time groups of horsemen—some-

times Whites, sometimes Reds—would ride up and demand one or more of the herds, until there were no more to look after. Sadly the shepherds watched the last herds being driven off, and then, having made up bundles of their possessions, they went their different ways. Mark was sent back to his mother in the village.

On his return home he found the village full of armed men. They were living in all the houses. In Mark's own house there were six. One of them, Nikita Gerasimovich, a bow-legged man with heavily bearded face and rows of medals on his chest, seemed to enjoy special authority among the rest.

"What has brought us here?" he asked. "Is it our job to join in quarrels over other people's land? We've been tricked. These peasants have shared out the land, and quite right too. But now we've come and taken the land from the people who work it and handed it back to the landowners. What for?"

However the Whites were not to be left in peaceful possession of the village for long. Within a radius of some twenty miles around it there was constant fighting between Red and White patrols, and several times the village itself changed hands. In one of these battles, Timothy Surov was killed while driving a *sleigh* full of wounded men.

Jacob dead, Sergei dead, Simon armless, Dmitri missing, and now Timothy. Beneath this new sorrow Vera Ivanovna was bowed down. She didn't cry much but sat silent on a bench, her eyes fixed on the corner of the room, praying. She sat there all that day, all the night, and all the next day. Tatiana kissed her hands, wept for her, tried to make her eat; but her mother saw nothing, not even her own children's tears. Vera's hair, which had been very black, turned quite grey.

Gradually the Red Guards commanded by General Ipatov and led by Kornei and Simon grew stronger than the White forces opposed to them, and the time came when they at last succeeded not only in recapturing the village but in holding it. In the fight they took more than a hundred prisoners, among whom was the officer who had beaten Vera Ivanovna almost to death, and also Nikita Gerasimovich.

To celebrate the victory Vera Ivanovna served a great meal in her kitchen, for her own sons and the other Red



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To celebrate the victory Vera Ivanovna served a great meal in her kitchen, for her own sons and the other Red

Guard officers. They all ate out of one dish set in the middle of the table, which she kept filled with food. There was not much talk during the meal, but when they laid down their spoons they all began to speak at once.

"We've taken more than a hundred prisoners," Simon reported to Ipatov. "What are we to do with them?"

"We'll do with them as they did with four hundred of ours—shoot them," said Ipatov.

Hearing this Vera Ivanovna started away from the wall where she had been standing and went to the table. Without saying a word she dropped down on her knees beside Ipatov. A silence fell on the room. Fixing her eyes on his face she said, her voice trembling, "Spare them; don't shed any more blood. . . . Blood results only in blood. These men have mothers too. They have wives and children. If you kill them you kill little children too, waiting for their fathers to come home. Don't be so terrible. Man has need for mercy."

Grinding his teeth Ipatov rose and went to the window. For a moment or two there was a silence, broken only by Vera's bitter crying. Then he turned and raised her from the floor.

"What do you think, Simon? Perhaps your mother is right. Maybe if we let them go, the Whites will stop killing our men."

Simon was about to answer, but his mother rushed to him and hung on to his shoulder, and her loud whisper filled all the house:

"Simon, my beloved son, for your father's sake, for the sake of your young brothers . . ."

Simon stared at the floor, and his words had a heavy bitter note as he said:

"I have no pity for these men, and never will have; but my mother has made me think. Give your orders, Ipatov. As you order, so shall it be."

"I think my own mother would have said the same as you," Ipatov said to Vera Ivanovna, "but they killed her because she was my mother." For a moment there was anger on his face, but his voice softened as he turned to her. "All right," he said, "we'll do as you ask and let the prisoners go."

The year 1919 passed in much bloodshed, trouble, hardship and hunger; 1920 arrived. Once more silence had settled down on the Surov house. Of her twelve chil-

dren Vera Ivanovna had only three now living with her—Tatiana, eighteen, Ivan, thirteen, and Mark, eleven.

Dmitri had been killed by the Whites, but she had not been told this. Simon had become quite an important man and was responsible for the supervision of the whole area. He had gone to live in the town which was the headquarters, and Barbara had gone to join him there. It was said that Kornei was in command of a *regiment* and had become quite famous in the Budenny First Cavalry Army. Taras and Philip were members of Kornei's staff, and Gregory was a *squadron* commander.

Letters were few and far between, and Vera Ivanovna could never be certain at any moment whether her sons were alive or dead. During one of these long silences, during which she seemed even more sorrowful and anxious than usual, Tatiana and her two brothers decided that one of them must go in search of their brothers and bring back news of them for their mother. But which should it be? For various reasons the choice fell on Mark, and for a long time the three made preparations for his journey into the unknown.

Budenny's Cavalry Army was said to be somewhere in the Ukraine, and that did not seem very far to the youngsters, who had no idea just how big Russia is. Mark thought he would have to travel only a little way beyond the town where Simon was working to get to the Ukraine. And once he was there, of course, he would find his brothers easily.

The evening that Vera Ivanovna learned that her very youngest son had gone to look for his brothers the house was loud with her crying and moaning. But there was nothing she could do about it, for by that time Mark was on a train many many miles away, lost in a world of struggling human bodies, people made homeless by four years of war with Germany and three years of civil war. The railways were packed with human beings. People waited for weeks, sometimes for months, for the chance to make a journey. And at every station, and even along the track, boys and girls who had lost their parents or had been abandoned by them stood begging for food. Everywhere there was dirt, hopelessness, silent despair.

The food Mark had taken with him did not last more than a week. Then, as he had nothing to give in exchange for food, he had to work his way, getting small jobs from time to time at the railway stations. But there were not

many such opportunities to work, and more often than not he went hungry. Even so he was lucky to get what he did, for many people were unable to get anything, and died of hunger while traveling on the railroad. When they did, the bodies were carried into an empty storehouse and left there. Often no one asked whose body it was, or why that person had come to that spot to die. Man as an individual was too unimportant for anyone to be interested in him.

Yet of all the horrible things Mark saw as he wandered from station to station in that ruined land he thought that the *lice* were the worst. That small insect had declared war on man. It invaded the stations and conquered the human beings crowded there. The floors, the benches, even the walls were covered with their crawling bodies. When after a restless night the people sleeping in the station got up, they brushed the insects off their clothes by the hundreds.

Constantly struggling against hunger and lice Mark at last reached the Ukraine. Budenny's Cavalry Army was somewhere there, but no one could tell him which way to go to find it. Backward and forward he wandered over the country—a small, small boy in a great confusion. He traveled on the roofs of railway cars, or on gasoline trucks where he was almost made unconscious by the smell of the petroleum. Often he walked.

His search for his brothers at last brought him to a station where he had to wait for about a week for a train to come. There the stationmaster happened to take some notice of him. Learning that he was wandering in search of the Army he sent for the boy.

"In the next town there's a hospital attached to the Budenny Army," he told Mark. "You go there and they'll help you to find your brothers. I'm afraid you'll have to walk but it isn't far—only twenty miles."

Mark reached the town the very next day.

## "Son of the Regiment"

AT THE HOSPITAL MARK was asked what regiment his brothers were in.

"I don't know," he said.

"Then it won't be easy to find them," said the woman who had let him in. "The Budenny Army is very big, and it has lots of regiments. What's your name?"

"Surov."

"Surov?" she exclaimed. "Why didn't you say so before? You may not have to look far for your brothers after all—we've got two Surovs here. But one of them \_\_\_\_\_,"

Without finishing the sentence she took Mark to a room where he found Kornei, wounded in the leg and arm, sitting at a table; while Taras was lying, very ill, in a bed in the corner.

"Mark!" exclaimed Kornei joyfully. "Where in the world have you come from?" Then, seeing Mark look towards the bed, his face darkened. "Yes," he said, "it's Taras; he's very sick."

From the bed came a feeble voice. "Did I hear Mark or was I dreaming?"

Mark went across to the bed and stood there, not knowing what to say. Now he could see his sick brother's face, pale, thin, covered with sweat. Where his legs should have been the blanket was flat. Mark felt so frightened that he gripped Kornei's hand, digging his fingers into the flesh.

"Is Mother all right?" questioned Taras' feeble voice.

"Yes . . . she's quite all right," the boy whispered.

"That's good. And Dad? He's back at home now, isn't he? I must go out now and get my horse." He passed off a quiet, unconscious muttering.

Mark was thoroughly scrubbed in ~~steaming hot water~~ and given some clean clothing to ~~wear~~. A few days later Taras died, and was buried in the ~~municipal~~ graveyard.

Although Kornei's wounds were not properly healed he could not bear to go on staying in the hospital where Taras had died, and he insisted on leaving, against the doctor's orders.

As they drove away, leaving Taras behind in his grave, Kornei said in a tone of slow cold fury: "That's another Surov life gone. First Father, then Dmitri, then Gregory, and now Taras. And others will die. The Surov family is being destroyed."

A tear rolled down his cheek. "This wind is making my eyes water," he said. He wiped the tears from his cheeks and turned away, so that Mark should not see.

Back at regimental headquarters a big argument developed between Commander Kornei and his youngest brother. The regiment was about to move into action against Nestor Makhno, another White leader who had rebelled against Soviet rule and was sweeping over the countryside with a band of several thousand men. Budenny's army had been ordered to destroy Makhno and clear the Ukraine of his followers. So the Red Cavalry was going into battle once more. But what was to be done with Mark? Send him back to the village? Impossible—another such journey might be his last. But he was too young, Kornei thought, to move about with the regiment. That would be dangerous too. And yet Mark refused to be left behind with the old women and children.

In the end Kornei gave in. After a long discussion with one of his officers he said to Mark angrily, "As you won't stop here I'm assigning you to the second squadron under the orders of Tikhon Sidorovich. If through not obeying his orders you get into trouble don't come running to me. Though I'm your brother, I shall see that you get the punishment you deserve."

Kornei's forces pursued Makhno's men round the Ukrainian countryside for two months, but the rebel leader refused to be drawn into a battle. It was bitterly cold, that winter of 1920, and the regiment lost more than half its horses and men through frostbite.

Mark, dressed and armed like any Red cavalryman, rode with the second squadron on a fine young horse called Raven, which Tikhon had found for him. The men of the squadron, who took great care of him, were already calling him the "son of the regiment." Mark thought of himself as a real soldier, and his heart swelled with pride. Tikhon Sidorovich had secret instructions from

Kornei that if a fight started Mark was to be sent back to the rear with the regimental cooks and servants and medical orderlies, who would keep him safe until the fight ended.

When, however, a surprise attack was made on the regiment, Mark was nowhere near Sidorovich; he was riding with Kornei at the head of the line. In the confusion that followed, his horse fell and Mark, wounded in the leg, was knocked unconscious. When he awoke he found himself lying on the floor in a hospital room, surrounded by groaning men.

It was getting dark when Kornei, terribly worried and full of self-reproach, came to see him. Guessing at the thoughts that were going through his mind, Mark made light of his wound. "It's nothing to be alarmed about," he said, smiling, "but how is Tikhon Sidorovich?"

"He was killed," said the nurse who was standing with Kornei.

Tikhon Sidorovich dead! Somehow that was impossible for Mark's heart and mind to believe it. The news brought tears to his eyes. They poured down his face and he made no attempt to wipe them away.

"Don't cry, Mark." Kornei forced the words out. His own face was twisted with suffering. "That's how it goes. In war one moment you're alive, the next you're dead. Every one of us carries death with him."

Silently Kornei went out into the night and hurried back to the fighting.

Life in the hospital threw Mark entirely into the company of grown-up men. As in the regiment, so here in the hospital, all life was built on dreams of the future. Each man had his own idea of what that future would be like; all thought of it in terms of happiness and joy.

In Mark's room there were fourteen men, all from various regiments of the Budenny Army. About this time Moscow was beginning to send out floods of *propaganda* material; booklets and pamphlets printed on very cheap paper were sent out to all units of the army, including the hospital. Of all the men in the hospital Mark was the best educated, and so he had to read everything that arrived for them. He not only read; he tried to understand what he read. Then he would explain it all to the others. And thus, at the age of thirteen, he became a Communist propagandist.



Like the men round him, Mark, too, learned to dream. The war 'will end, he thought, and then we'll all go back home. We'll all have big houses with lots of rooms in them. We'll all be dressed in Sunday clothes and we'll walk about the streets enjoying ourselves. And it will be like that always. . . . It won't be necessary to fight any more and there won't be any people covered with lice waiting about in the stations; they'll all get to where they want to go quickly. . . . And the houses must have gardens. So we'll have to pull down the old houses and build new ones. The people's government will provide sweets and toys for the children. . . . Mark kept this part of his dreaming separate from the grown-ups, for he wasn't sure they would agree not to beat children and always give them what they needed—trousers, for instance, with two pockets, and a pair of boots for every child.

As the chief hospital propagandist Mark was often called upon to read aloud at the bedside of some wounded soldier. Very late one night he had such a call from a soldier named Anaviev who lay dying, and knew it. By the light of an oil lamp Mark began to read to him. The soldier lay with closed eyes as Mark read page after page; the moment the boy stopped the man opened his eyes and said "Go on!"

"The basic principle of Communist society is: from each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs," Mark read aloud. "The achievement of this principle in life depends entirely on our ability to make human labor more productive, with the help of machines. Under communism the productivity of human labor will be increased so much that one hour's work a day will be enough to provide all men with plenty of all the necessities of life."

"That's fine," Anaviev said. "Only one hour's work a day!" Weak though he was he could still remember how he had to work, as a laborer, day and night, to work till he dropped, simply in order to keep alive.

Many people read the Bible to the dying. But the harsh men of the Revolution had found a new God, Lenin, and a new Bible, Karl Marx's "Das Kapital," and this Bible they believed in with all their simple and innocent minds. Mark sat at a dying man's bedside and went on repeating this new gospel until, about dawn, a long groan warned him that Anaviev's end was near. When, overcoming his fear, he looked up from the book, he saw

that Anaviev was staring at him with fixed eyes. For a second he thought the man wanted to ask him something; then he realized that this was death.

A few days later there arrived at the hospital an instructor from the Army Political Department in Moscow. His name was Peresvetov. He had been given the task of organizing political education in the regiments of Budenny's Cavalry. It was not long before he was told about Mark's self-appointed activities in the hospital, and immediately sent for him to ask the boy for an account of what he was doing.

Mark told him about the books he had read and the books he wanted to read, about the evening talks in which he had taken part, and about Anaviev, the dying soldier to whom he had read.

"And you weren't frightened?"

"I was," Mark admitted. "It was terrible, but I got over it."

Peresvetov walked about the room, thinking. Suddenly he halted and laid his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Get ready to go away, Mark. You're going to study, my boy. We're just starting to organize a political school, and you will attend it. And afterwards we will consider what you should do next. It is your generation which will have the task of remaking the world, and to do that you will have to study much and thoroughly."

It was a strange sort of school to which Mark was sent. Because the army was always on the move the school also had to be always on the move. With rifles across their backs and books tied to their saddles, the students went right through the campaigns, frozen, weather-beaten from the steppe winds, exhausted by the long marches. Whenever the army halted, they heaped their rifles in one corner of a hut and brought out their books. They read; they listened to lectures; they discussed and argued; with hard painful thought they settled, or thought they had settled, the complicated problems of government.

After two years of this sort of life, Peresvetov returned to Moscow, the school came to an end and the students were sent back to their regiments. Mark was now a youth of fifteen, grown tall and broad-shouldered but with the same thin face and restless burning eyes that he had had as a boy.

Kornei, was in charge of a whole *division* when Mark returned, and sent for him with the idea of having him close by at divisional headquarters. But Mark refused to go, preferring to rejoin his old friends in the second squadron of the regiment Kornei had once commanded. Although he was still the "son of the regiment" he now also became its political instructor; with the knowledge which he had gained at the hospital and in the school he was able to tell the soldiers what the Communist society for which they were fighting would look like; he could answer their questions; he could discuss things with them.

The Budenny army was now living in barracks in the North Caucasus region. Supplies were more plentiful, but the need for more political education, especially for the younger men, had become even greater, for the period of change-over from the old order to the new was proving to be longer and more difficult than anyone had expected and neither the army nor the people were happy.

The country was completely ruined. The peasant farmers kept going somehow or other, until a new disaster occurred—famine. Drought, followed by crop failure in the Volga areas, the Ukraine, and the north Caucasus, resulted in the death of many millions of people. There were reports from some places that human flesh was being eaten. If it had not been for the help sent from other countries, chiefly from America, the disaster would have been far greater, for the new Soviet government could do nothing to help. On the contrary, in order to save the townspeople from death by starvation, it had to squeeze out everything the farmers possessed and produced. Very often its agents tried to squeeze out more than the farmers themselves had. And for the first time doubts arose in the hearts of some of the fighters for the revolution. Although the Russian people have always had to suffer need, misery, lawlessness, not all of them were prepared to suffer and wait once again, and here and there the peasants, even those who had at one time been strong Communists, broke into unorganized violent revolt.

Though limited to small areas, those armed risings began to become a serious danger to the new government. Moscow was specially troubled by the continual struggle that went on in the North Caucasus region. The Caucasian foot-hills were highly favorable to successful rebellion, and the area was inhabited by hard-fighting

and fearless Cossacks. They organized themselves into rebel bands known as "Green" detachments, and raided small and large villages, killing off the agents and representatives of the Soviet government without pity or mercy. It was not long before a large area, rich in grain and cattle, was completely cut off from Soviet rule.

At first an attempt was made to capture or wipe out the Greens by armed force. When this proved impossible Lenin proclaimed an *amnesty*, in the name of the Soviet Government, and promised that all Greens who laid down their arms and surrendered would be allowed to return to their homes in safety.

The amnesty led to a new kind of job for Mark. As soon as it was issued, the Regimental commander and *commissar* wrote letters to the Green commanders and ordered Mark, dressed as a poor Cossack lad, to carry these letters to the villages. Sometimes he threw the letter into a house where he knew Greens were in the habit of assembling; more often he called at the house and said that the Reds had ordered him to deliver the letter. Sometimes he was allowed to go away again at once, but usually he was asked to wait and take an answer back to the Reds.

It was hard and dangerous work, but Mark enjoyed it because he thought he was playing a part, however small, in restoring peace between brothers and winning the Greens over to Communism. Because of his efforts and bravery many of the Greens were, in fact, persuaded to accept the amnesty, to give up fighting and to go back to work on their farms.

At one final surrender ceremony Mark was presented with an ornamented sword by a Cossack youth named Ostap, with whom he had become very friendly, and since he had nothing to give in exchange for this gift but his horse, Raven, he was forced to part with it. He loved the horse as he would a brother, but having been ordered by the regimental commissar to make this sacrifice, as a sign of good faith and good will to all the Greens in the area, he had to obey. This was his only sorrow. Ostap gave him another horse in exchange.

Mark regretted the loss of his horse most bitterly when one night he was ordered to ride one hundred and ten miles across difficult country, in less than twenty-four

hours, to deliver an important report to Budenny himself. The telephone wires had been cut by the rebels in many places, and there was no other way of sending the report.

"It's hopeless to think of sending anyone but you," said the commander to Mark. "You're light, and a horse will carry you over the hills more easily than anyone else. You will ride a horse which the Greens have given us as a gift for Budenny. It's a strong animal and one which should be able to stand the journey, though God knows what it will be like by the time you hand it over. I've sent it on ahead with a *patrol*. You will do the first twenty miles on your own horse, then change to the other; it will be all ready for you."

If only I were riding Raven, Mark thought as he set out on his journey. Anxiously he listened to the breathing of the big-headed ugly little horse which Ostap had given him. He was afraid that it would not be able to stand up to the task. But when after an hour had passed it was still going as steadily as at the start, breathing regularly and breaking into a run whenever called upon, he began to change his opinion. In four hours Mark reached the village where the patrol waited for him with the fine big horse, the gift for Budenny, which he was to ride for the rest of the journey. Beside this beautiful animal, the little horse seemed a miserable misshapen creature. Yet, after carrying Mark twenty miles he was standing quietly without showing the least sign of weariness. Now Mark felt sorry to part with him for, like Raven, the little horse had taken possession of his heart.

I'll ride with two horses, he suddenly decided. Perhaps a small drop of Mongolian blood flowing in his veins suggested the idea to him. When setting out on a long journey the Mongols had been in the habit of taking two or even three horses, changing from one to another and thus covering great distances.

The patrol commander didn't care how Mark went, as long as he went at once. In a few moments, therefore, Mark was riding off into the early morning mist on the big horse, while the little one ran at his side tied by a leading rope.

Ninety miles of riding were ahead of him, with several streams to swim across, several mountains to climb over and "Greens" to avoid. And only twenty hours to do it in. But Mark knew he could do it and that he would do it. He had already given his two horses names. The big one

he called Yard, and Ostap's horse he called Inch. Yard had a long, *striding* trot, and to keep up with him Inch often had to break into a *gallop*. Then Yard would scornfully look out of the corner of his eye at the little horse galloping alongside to keep up with him. Mark soon noticed that there was no need to keep Inch tied to Yard; he never had to be pulled, and when Mark let him go he continued to run at Yard's side. Where the path was too narrow for two horses to run side by side he dropped back but kept immediately behind Yard's tail. It's not the first time he's done this sort of thing, Mark thought with satisfaction.

After some time Mark changed over to Inch and led Yard by the rope. Then later he slipped to the ground and ran with the two horses for a while, in order to give both of them a rest. When the path was narrow, steep and difficult he let Inch go first, followed by Yard, with himself hanging on to Yard's tail, for Inch proved to be a wonderfully sure-footed guide.

Soon after midday they left the last mountain path behind. Now they had only the steppe to cross. They had covered the forty-five miles of mountain road in thirteen hours. Before them stretched the greater part of the road but the lesser part of the time. After resting the horses for two hours or so and giving them something to eat Mark rode on once more, mile after mile.

Unexpectedly it was the bigger horse who first began to show signs of exhaustion, while Inch was still going well. As the journey continued he rode Inch more and more and gave Yard less and less work to do, until finally he was riding Inch only. When he rode into the town at midnight, he knocked at the window of the first house and left Yard in the care of the old man who came out, for the big horse could not go another step.

Learning that Budenny was on a train, consisting of only three large cars, which was standing in the railway station, Mark left Inch in the station yard and made his way through crowds of soldiers to the platform. After telling the guard his name and business he was called into one of the cars. Budenny was sitting at a small side table, his tunic unbuttoned, while a young woman was preparing supper at a larger table.

Mark handed the report to Budenny and stood wait-

ing while he read through it. Then Budenny, turning to another officer, said:

"Look at this little fellow, Klim. To bring in a report from a task force he has ridden a hundred and ten miles in twenty-three hours, and he isn't even breathing hard."

A short but heavily-built man with a round face and widely-set eyes came across to Mark. The lad guessed at once that this was Voroshilov.

Voroshilov looked over the report. Then, staring at Mark, he whispered something into Budenny's ear. Budenny also looked up and stared at Mark.

"So you're divisional commander Surov's little brother? Look, wife," he called to the woman who was preparing the meal. "This is Kornei's brother."

She came across to the lad and nodded. "Why, of course, he's just like Kornei. But what the child needs is some hot food, and quickly, and there you are keeping him standing while you talk."

After a good meal Mark slept for many hours, and when he woke he found the train was moving. He at once thought of Inch, the wonderful little horse he had left behind, and ran out into the hallway. An officer was standing there, and when he heard Mark's story of the two horses he burst out into a roar of laughter. Then he told Mark that while he was sleeping Budenny had gone out to the yard to have a look at the horse which had been sent to him as a gift, and seeing only Inch, looking more like a rat than a horse, he thought that someone had played a trick on him. It had made him very angry.

An hour later Mark was again called to Budenny's car. This time only Budenny and Voroshilov were there. They must have been told about the two horses, for Budenny at once said:

"You needn't worry about my horse; he will be collected from the old man and brought to me. But now Voroshilov wants to talk to you."

Voroshilov looked at Mark with great interest. Then he rose and, putting his hand on the lad's shoulder, made him sit down.

"It's time you were done with fighting, Mark!" he said, halting in front of the boy. "At your wonderful age you must study, study, and go on studying. And so, dear comrade, you are to be disarmed and sent to Moscow. I will give you a letter to someone there and you will study."

at Moscow University. And if you want anything write to me or to Budenny and we will help.

"You know what an attack is? Well, now you've got to attack a big strong *fortress*. It's called knowledge. But I know you are a Budenny man, so I know you will not be afraid."

And so it happened that a week later Mark Surov found himself on a train and on his way to Moscow.

## Chapter 4

# Splinters and Hummingbirds

IN MOSCOW MARK LIVED with three other students—Yura, Leonid and Alexander—in a house some distance from the University. For some time his best friend was Yura.

And for some time his best girl-friend, the only woman with whom he was ever really in love, was a student named Lena.

Strangely enough it was those two friendships that were to give Mark most pain, cause him most suffering, both during his stay in Moscow and long after. For although he was attracted by their personalities, and in particular by Lena's charm and beauty, he did not like their way of thinking. Both friendships started with an argument. Perhaps this in itself should have warned him, but, to the young, argument is the breath of life. No one could blame young Mark Surov, fresh from the simplicity of his family life in the steppe and his fighting life in the army, if in the beginning of these friendships he could not foresee their end.



were the Stalinists; on the other the Trotskyites, among the latter\* were Yura and his friends. Between the two were those who, like Mark, wanted to serve neither Stalin nor Trotsky but communism and the Communist Party itself.

"It's hopeless trying to make you see political sense," Yura would say angrily. "You still don't know whose side you're on."

"Yes, I do," Mark would reply, equally angry. "I'm on the side of the Party and the Soviet government. To quarrel and fight and divide the Party over stupid ideas doesn't make political sense to me. What's important is that the workers and the peasants should have a better life and more freedom. That's what we fought for; that's what my father and my brothers died for; that's all I'm interested in. And anyway I'm a student and I'm here to study. I'm not going to waste my time taking part in politics."

Most of the students however were only too happy to take part in politics. One day Yura and his friends organized a huge student demonstration in favor of Trotsky. Yura felt certain that Vishinsky, who had just been given *an important position at the University*, was a supporter of Trotsky, and that therefore he, Yura, had nothing to fear.

But Yura was wrong. On the day of the demonstration Vishinsky, in a public speech, facing Trotsky across the square, called him a traitor to the Party and the country, and the demonstration broke up in violence and a complete defeat for the Trotskyites. Vishinsky, it seems, had weighed the chances very carefully, and had finally decided that of the two sides Stalin's was the safest to be on.

Together with a large number of other students Yura was *expelled* from the University and sent to Siberia. To lose his best friend in this way was a great blow to Mark, but he forced himself to believe that the most active of the top Trotskyites had to be removed if only for the sake of peace in the capital.

Although Mark had refused to "take sides" in his unending arguments with Yura, the hard conditions of his birth and early years made him sympathetic to Stalin's practical down-to-earth approach, which had been born of the same sort of experience as his own. Without realizing it, he tended to identify the Communist Party with Stalin, and when, in mourning the loss of his friend, he made excuses for Yura he also made excuses for Stalin.

For these excuses he found an expression which in later years he was to repeat to himself again and again, which he would hold on to, as a drowning man holds on to a straw. "You can't chop wood without making *splinters*." In building a glorious Socialist future the Communist Party had much wood to chop. If there were splinters, if people like Yura were hurt, that could not be helped. This was the faith that was now born in him. "You can't chop wood without making splinters. To understand is to forgive. History will understand us, and it will not condemn us because of the splinters we're making."

Mark's relations with Lena were equally unhappy, and in a way for the same reason. Lena was also one of those inexperienced, hot-headed young revolutionaries who believed that not only the old political system but everything about the old way of life had to be destroyed, to be changed. Like Yura she was full of ideas which had no basis in real life, or at least not in the sort of life which Mark had lived.

Ideas about love, for example.

"My dear Mark," she would say, "surely you understand that there's no such thing as love, and never has been. It's all a simple matter of sexual relations, of physical attraction."

"How do you know?" Mark asked miserably. "Have you ever had a man?"

"Not yet." Her face went red. "But, believe me, it's quite a simple affair. And then look at marriage," she went on hurriedly. "What's marriage? It's just a trick, a trick to make women slaves to their husbands and families. If I, as a woman, feel attracted to you, nothing should be allowed to prevent me from sleeping with you."

This was what was known as the "new morality," and it was firmly believed in by most of the Russian youth of that time.

To Mark, with warm memories of his mother's loyalty to her husband and devotion to her children, and with his strong sense of family, such talk was disgusting, boring, meaningless. He loved Lena very much. Tall, with fair hair, full breasts and large grey eyes looking straight into the world, she seemed to him like the ideal woman of the future. Yes, he loved her and wanted her desperately, but every time she was with him she talked of the new morality, and every time she did so something

seemed to dry up inside him; his love seemed to die. If she really loved him why did she talk that way? If there was no such thing as love what was the point of love-making? If she was ready to sleep with anybody who attracted her what hope could there be of a steady future with her as his wife?

Feeling rejected by Mark, but still determined to put her ideas into practice, Lena had her first experience with the son of one of the university professors. Alas! Perhaps there was something in the old-fashioned idea of love after all; at any rate sex without it proved such a painful ordeal, one so shocking and disgusting, that after first trying unsuccessfully to hang herself Lena was ill, almost out of her mind, for many weeks.

When Mark heard about it he too almost went out of his mind. Even after he had half-killed the boy who had pushed Lena into practice of the new morality, in a bloody fight, he felt no better. He could no longer love Lena; nor could he stop loving her. For months they did not see each other.

It was with a sense of relief that he learned, towards the end of his sixth year in Moscow, that, as a member of the Communist Party, he had been given a special job in the Soviet Far East, many thousands of miles away from Moscow and Lena.

"This is a great honor for you," said Yeshov, head of the Personnel Department of the Party Central Committee, "but you will be working under very difficult conditions."

"I'll do my best," said Mark simply.

"Further argument is unnecessary," said Vavilov, regional Party secretary of the Soviet Far East. "Stalin's orders are that the people are to be transported to Permskoe at once. We've decided to send you, Comrade Surov, as Party representative, for the first transport of seven hundred workers. As you know, at this time of the year the waters of the Amur River are frozen over. You will travel over the ice in sleighs and trucks down to the village of Permskoe, near the mouth of the river, where the new town is to be built."

Mark's mission in the Far East was to help organize the construction of this new town, some hundreds of miles from Khabarovsk, the Far East capital where he had spent the first eight months. The new town was to be a

center for the production of vast quantities of war materials, chiefly fighter-planes and bomber-planes.

The idea for the town had been suggested and the plans worked out by a man named Vinogradov, once a military engineer in the army of the Czar, while he was in prison for having taken part in a plot against the new government. He had pointed out two good reasons for building a new town in that far-off place. First, it was at the heart of an area rich in iron ore; secondly, it was well out of bomber-range of any possible enemy air-base in Europe.

When the scheme was put before Stalin he sent for Vinogradov and after asking many questions gave it his approval. He immediately ordered that Vinogradov should be released from prison in order to direct the work of construction. As Stalin held out his hand to say good-by he remarked:

"I think your plan is excellent, Vinogradov. But there's one mistake in the *estimates*, and you'll have to put it right."

"What's that?"

"You've said it will take eight years to build the town and the factories. The work must be completed in two years."

"Impossible!"

"It's not impossible," Stalin said confidently. "A little more effort and self-sacrifice, a little less *sentimentality*, and the impossible becomes possible."

By the time Vinogradov returned to Khabarovsk to complete his plans winter had arrived. Without waiting for preparations to be made, Stalin made a speech calling on Soviet youth to volunteer for the task of building the new town on the banks of the River Amur. Immediately, from all parts of the country thousands of volunteers began to stream into Khabarovsk. Could Stalin or his advisers in Moscow have overlooked the simple facts that when the volunteers arrived in Khabarovsk there would be nowhere suitable for them to live? That there would be no warm winter clothing for them to wear? That there would be no food to feed them with? The government might, at the beginning, have been ignorant of conditions at Khabarovsk in the depth of winter; but could they have still been ignorant after Vinogradov and Mark had sent telegram after telegram to Moscow requesting that the flow of volunteers should be stopped at least until

the spring? Or was this what Stalin had in mind when he talked about less "sentimentality?"

Not only did Stalin insist, in spite of the telegram sending more and more volunteers; he was also insisting that those who were already in Khabarovsk should once be transported to the site of the new town "with regard to the difficulties." The village of Permskoe, was to be transformed into the large industrial town of Komsomolsk, consisted at that time of twelve small huts. The river bank on which the huts stood was frozen in winter to such a great depth that not even holes could be dug out, in the normal way, to provide shelter. There was no food to be obtained locally. And when the volunteers got there they would have no work to do, because the necessary materials and machinery could not be sent for a long time to come.

All Mark's efforts to prevent such needless sacrifices, such useless suffering, were in vain. "Further action is unnecessary; these are Stalin's orders," Vavilov said. And that brought the last of the many discussions on this subject to an end.

Her name was Katya. Mark called her Hummingbird, partly because when he first met her she had been wearing a bright blue brooch shaped like a hummingbird, partly because, as he had said laughingly, hummingbirds are supposed to be lucky. But could anyone have been less lucky? His hummingbird was caught in a trap from which, though Mark would not admit it even to himself, there seemed to be no escape.

Katya's father was a "White" Russian who, after the defeat of General Prokovsky's forces in the Ukraine had fled to Harbin, on the coast of Chinese Manchuria. There, having married a Japanese woman, he lived for many years. But she died when Katya was only fourteen years old, and in his loneliness he developed a longing to return to his homeland. It was this longing which led him to take a chance on not being recognized, or, if he were recognized, on being *pardoned* by the Soviet authorities for his former counter-revolutionary activities. The plan did not succeed. He was recognized, almost immediately, and he was not pardoned.

The police allowed the father to live in freedom as long as Katya agreed to work for them as a secret agent. For such work her beauty, her manner and her excellent knowledge of three languages—Russian, Japanese and Chinese—made her well suited. The secret police had managed to get her into the Japanese Consulate, first as a household servant and later as an office secretary. By searching through the wastepaper baskets and by keeping her eyes and ears open she had been able to obtain some useful bits of information. Now she was being trained to photograph secret papers. Though she hated and feared the work it had not seemed too bad until there arrived at the Consulate a young Japanese who, as soon as he saw Katya, had only one idea in his mind. Katya was told that if she wanted her father to stay out of prison she must on no account resist the newcomer's advances. And that was when she first met Mark.

As soon as, crying bitterly, she had told Mark her story, he went to see the Soviet secret police. In his innocence he believed that when he informed them he wanted to marry Katya they would release her from the agreement. But they were ready for him, and their answer was no.

"We know all about your relations with Katya," they said, "and we won't interfere so long.

tinues to do the work we have assigned to her. But she too valuable for us to let go, and if you persuade her resist you will find yourself in trouble. . . . And there is her father . . ."

Mark had but one more card to play, and that was appeal to higher authority. The name of Surov was well known in Moscow; it had influence. He would use the influence. But for that he needed time, and now there was no time—he had to leave for Permskoe at once.

Thus it was with a heavy heart that he saw his Hummingbird that night and kissed her good-by early next morning. He did not know how long he would have to be away and her work was horrible, dangerous. What might not happen to her before he returned?

Once he was on the way, Mark had no time or energy for anything but the task of getting seven hundred youngsters safely to Permskoe, over the frozen waters of the Amur River, through a frost-bound *wilderness* of dense unexplored forest. The cold was so severe that it was impossible to stop anywhere on the way to rest; except for short halts, for meals and refuelling, the long line of trucks had to keep crawling along the river edge for eleven days and eleven nights.

In later years Mark was to remember that journey as one remembers a horrible dream. The frequent breakdowns, with all metallic parts so icy that just to touch them burnt the skin off the mechanics' hands; the ever-present possibility of breaking through the ice—the trucks did, with the loss of four lives; the terrifying darkness of the long nights, in which even the most powerful headlamps seemed to lose their brightness; the constant shaking of the trucks and roar of the engines, which together with the lack of space made sleep all but impossible; the awful boredom of watching the trees on the river banks slide slowly past; and, above all, fear of the unknown and of the hardships that lay ahead when they reached Permskoe. All these things combined to fill the seven hundred volunteers with despair. Mark tried to keep them moving, to make them walk, but they would do nothing but sit in sleepy silence.

On the fourth day, after one youngster, half out of his mind, had dropped from a truck and run screaming towards the forest, Mark was forced to play a trick on them. Solemnly reading aloud from a piece of paper (c

which actually nothing was written) he announced that General Blucher, Commander-in-Chief of the Special Far Eastern Army, had proclaimed the expedition a military advance; and that the Young Communists would therefore be expected to obey orders as if they were soldiers. After that Mark made them march or run for several hours every day; he staged mock attacks on an imaginary enemy on the banks of the river; he forced them to sing; he tried everything to make them more active and cheerful.

And finally, with the loss of only a few lives, he brought them to Permskoe.

But now he was faced with the most difficult task of all—the task of sheltering and feeding seven hundred people in a frost-bound forest, for the rest of a very long winter.

The frozen soil, hard as iron, resisted all efforts to dig into it. So Mark ordered that camp fires should be lit to melt it out. Inch by inch, by scraping and scraping, hollows in the earth were made deeper and deeper until everyone was sheltered underground, four or five men to a pit. The pits were covered with several layers of branches, over which earth was piled, and only a small hole was left for the men to crawl in and out. A fire was lit at the bottom of each pit, but it gave off not only warmth but smoke. The melting walls dripped with moisture. The warmth, the damp, and the smoke were inseparable, and great determination was required to remain for any length of time in these "graves." Again and again the men would rush out into the open air, wiping the dirt and tears from their faces and cursing everything and everyone on earth, until they were driven back by the cold.

"What have we been brought here for?" Mark was asked again and again. "We've been sent to our deaths."

"I know all that, comrades. I'm not trying to deceive you. We've got a very difficult winter ahead of us. But we've got to hold out; that's the only hope. Comrade Stalin called for you to be sent here. . . . It's his order, and we've carried it out. . . . Now we've got to fight for our lives—and help one another."

The next problem, now that the supplies that they had brought with them were rapidly being used up, was food. All that was left was a cereal made up in a sort of thick porridge and served with hardly any fat at all. Porridge



for breakfast; porridge for dinner; porridge for supper  
Day after day after day.

Mark saw that it was essential to get meat from some where. None of the Young Communists were experienced hunters. The only hope was to persuade the native people whose homes were in the forest—the Nanaitz tribesmen—to bring in *bear* and *reindeer*. But being widely scattered throughout the taiga, as the forest wilderness was called, the tribesmen were not easy to find, and they did not like to kill either of these animals unless it was absolutely necessary.

Somebody had to go out into the taiga to find the Nanaitz camps and persuade the tribesmen to use their hunting skills as a patriotic duty. Mark decided to go himself. Taking with him an old native guide who had lived in the forest all his life he set out, travelling on *ski*. His efforts in the first week met with such success that he decided to stay in the forest and continue the search leaving Permskoe further and further behind.

It was the hardest decision that Mark had ever had to make. He had been ordered to return to Khabarovsk as soon as the volunteers were settled in Permskoe. And since Katya's fate, and the fate of his love for her, might well depend on his early return, no one could have blamed him for obeying that order. But he felt that even if it resulted in losing Katya and being expelled from the Party his first duty was to the seven hundred volunteers whom he had been forced, against his will, to lead into the jaws of death. Somehow he had to keep them alive and loyal till the end of the winter.

Thus began weeks of lonely searching through the taiga, mostly on skis, with no one but his old guide and occasionally some Nanaitz tribesmen to talk to. Having persuaded one group to take food to Permskoe he would move on to the next camp, still further from the river. During these months he could never take off his clothes to wash the sweat and grime from his body. He passed whole days and nights, when snowstorms made it impossible to move from under the small tent-cover, with nothing to do but lie on his back and think or dream.

At last the snow and ice began to melt and leaves appeared on the branches of the trees. The long hard winter was over; spring had come. And with the coming of the spring the boats could begin to sail up and down the river again. Now there would be food in plenty for

he Permskoe volunteers and Mark's work was finished. Slowly he made his way through the taiga and across the endless marshes back to the river. He returned to Khabarovsk by train. He had expected to be away less than six weeks; looking back it seemed to him more like six years; in actual fact it was just about six months.

On his arrival at Khabarovsk he ordered the driver to take him not to Party Headquarters but to the little low house in the side street.

A strange woman answered his knock. Seeing the car at the gate she gave him a friendly smile. Mark stared at her, fear gripping at his heart.

"What do you want, comrade? Please come in," she said.

He followed her to Katya's room. But as soon as he entered he saw it was no longer Katya's room, for there were none of her things to be seen. Turning to the woman he asked her hoarsely:

"Where is . . . Katya Antina? Speak! For God's sake, speak!"

"I don't know," she said hurriedly. "There was a Russian or Chinese woman or someone living here before us, but we heard she had gone away. I don't know for certain."

Mark rushed out of the room, ran down the steps, and jumped into the car.

"Secret police," he ordered the driver.

Some minutes later he was shown into the same room as he had sat in once before. The same man was at the same desk.

"Where is she?" He had to force the words out.

Speaking very slowly the man said: "There's no point in our hiding the truth from you. . . . She's gone, and she won't be coming back. We know all about you. Comrade Surov, we trust you, and we would like to soften the blow for you by telling you that whatever happened to her happened while she was serving her country, the country which you are serving. All we know for certain is that it was the Japs' doing. Someone called for her early one morning and knocked on the window three times. We cannot understand why she opened the door, as we had forbidden her to do so. The neighbors heard a cry, but when they ran out there was no one to be seen. We have

done everything in our power to find her, but without success."

Mark slowly rose from his chair and fixed his burning, hate-filled eyes on the eyes of the man:

"You trust me, you say! I spit on your trust. You're a lot of trickster-gamblers, playing with other people's lives. You forced the girl, by threatening her father, to do work which she hated. And then you say 'She served her country.' She hadn't even seen that country. You made it shameful for her. You've lost the life with which you gambled, but you yourself are still alive and go unharmed."

Furiously, bitterly, Mark went to every higher official who might be of help in finding Katya, or at least in finding out what had happened to her. He even went to Blucher himself. Because he was well-liked and respected they all listened with sympathy. But they all had the same answer: "There's nothing to be done. You must make the best of it. She's gone and you will never see her again."

Night after night he buried his teeth in his pillow, so that the cry which would rise in his throat might not burst from his lips. Then, in the middle of the night, he would go to his office and the light would burn till morning. He worked furiously, almost madly. But from time to time he raised his eyes from his papers and, his face twisted with pain, he would whisper: "Forgive me, Hummingbird. . . . Forgive me for losing you." Then he would feel that she was in the room with him, that she was looking at him, with eyes that shone like stars and a look which said, "Don't leave me alone, Mark; I'm so afraid." She stretched out her hands to him; he rose and went to her. One step, two steps, five steps—he put out his hands, but all he touched was the cold wall.

A few weeks after his return Mark was ordered to attend a dinner-party held by the Khabarovsk Administration to celebrate the freeing of the Russian Far East from Japanese occupation. To this party were invited not only all the highest Russian officials in the area, but also representatives of the various countries which had Consulates there.

At the dinner table, by a strange chance, Mark found himself seated opposite Yoshima, the official at the Japanese consulate whose advances Katya had been ordered not to resist.

"The Far East is a fine country, isn't it?" Yoshima said to Mark as if making light conversation.

"Oh, yes," Mark forced himself to reply. "Foreigners have always liked our Far East very much."

"Naturally! We Japanese, for instance, have always been interested in the economic development of this part of the world. We have always wanted to know you Russians better. Among us, Russian is one of the most popular of all languages."

"I am very pleased to hear it. Very few Russians study Japanese."

"I think Japanese must be very difficult for Russians to learn, isn't it? I have met very few who speak it well."

"Not even among the women?"

A look passed over Yoshima's face, and his eyes turned cold and threatening.

"Russians who speak Japanese remind me of a certain winged creature; it is called a hummingbird," he said.

The blood drained from Mark's face. "Aren't hummingbirds supposed to be lucky?" he asked quietly, as if half asleep.

"We Japanese have the belief that it's a dead hummingbird that's lucky."

"A strange belief," Mark answered. "I thought all the great religions were very considerate of the life of birds. So your belief is rather unusual."

"Not really. You see we believe that birds, like humans, have unending life; so to send a bird to another world does not really harm it. The only condition is that the bird's last request must be observed."

"And is it?" Mark asked.

"By *Samurais*, it is."

The guests rose from the table and prepared to leave. As Mark was putting on his coat he heard Yoshima's voice behind him.

He turned. Yoshima held out a small package tied with pink ribbon.

"I'd like you to accept this in memory of our meeting. It's nothing, only a little remembrance. Good-by, Mr. Surov."

When he had gone Mark tore open the packet. Inside was a blue stone carved in the shape of a small bird with outstretched wings. It was Katya's lucky hummingbird. Or did it, now, look more like an unlucky splinter?

## Kogocha and the Coal Rush

THERE IS NO LIMIT to the power of the human heart to live through even the greatest of sorrows. If there were such a limit, Mark Surov's heart would surely have broken that night when Yoshima presented him with Katya's brooch. But the human heart has as much power to heal the wounds of the spirit as the body has power to heal the wounds of the flesh.

The days of despair passed into months, the months into a year, and Mark was still working at Khabarovsk, in the same office. Again and again, during many sleepless nights, he had seen Katya come from the darkest corner of the room, had talked with her. "Forgive me, dear, dear one, for not taking more care of you." There was silence in the room, but his heart caught the answer: "I longed for you so much, Mark; I was so afraid."

And each time he would reproach himself the more bitterly. If he had obeyed the Party order and returned to Khabarovsk she might still be alive and breathing, in all her laughing, golden loveliness; she might again be lying in his arms, with all her warmth and sweetness. What right had he to sacrifice her? The seven hundred volunteers would have lived through the winter somehow. And even if they had all died? What were their seven hundred lives worth, against her one?

Sometimes, tortured almost to the breaking-point by such thoughts, he tried to find peace by returning for a while to the taiga by the River Amur. Perhaps there, in the dark silence of the forest where his fateful decision had been made, he would recall more clearly the despairing looks of the lads who were in his care; he might convince himself yet again that it would have been impossible for him, at that time and under those conditions, to abandon them even to semi-starvation. Surely his duty to them had to come first.

It was on one such lonely walk that he became the unwilling witness of a sorrow which, if sorrow can be measured, was in a way even greater than his own.

rounding a bend in the river he heard voices, and instinctively drew back. From behind a tree he saw a tall young man facing the river, and in the man's arms was a young woman. The woman was speaking:

"No, Peter! I've made up my mind. I'm going with you."

"But it means your death, Maria, slow but certain death."

"I know. But before we find death we shall also find peace and freedom. We shall have gained a little life for you and a little freedom for us both. So I'm going with you."

"But think, Maria. You're young, you've got all your life before you. . . ."

"Dearest, please, please don't argue any more. I only want to be with you. You will wait for me here; I'll be back in three hours' time. We'll cross the river in a boat, take the train to the coast and then make for the island. Peter, dearest, only another three hours of separation, and then we shall be together, together to the end."

"All right, Maria, so be it. . . . to the end."

They kissed. Then she went to the water's edge, got into a rowboat and pulled strongly for the opposite bank. Peter stood among the bushes, motionless, staring after her. Suddenly, putting his hands to his head, as if to prevent it from bursting, he cried out desperately: "I can't! I mustn't!"

Quickly, almost wildly, he took a notebook from his pocket, wrote a few lines on the cover and fixed it to the trunk of a tall tree close to where they had been standing. Then, with the same desperate haste, he hurried off along the river bank.

Mark waited till he was out of sight and then, as if driven by some higher power, he took the notebook down from the tree. On the cover he read:

"My dearest Maria! I am going away alone. I cannot let you share my fate. I love you madly, but for that very reason I cannot let you ruin your life. On that leper island I shall find freedom, if only for a short time, and at a terrible price. There will be time enough to think of you, to remember you, to love and long for you. Peter."

Mark opened the notebook. God knows what it's all about, he thought. And this is what he read.

\* \* \*

## THE DIARY OF PETER NOVIKOFF

Mother, my dear Mother, you were not wrong in say-

ing that I was born under a lucky star. I have found coal. Yes, I, Péter Novikoff, who graduated only last year from the Leningrad Geological Institute, have found coal, and in a place where no one else would even have dreamed of looking for it. Now I find myself in Khabarovsk. I am setting out on the road to fame, and I have decided to keep this diary from the very beginning, for you Mother, and for one other woman whom I love as much as I love you. My discovery has solved the whole problem of fuel supply for future railway lines in this part of the Union. It will no longer be necessary to bring coal from the Donbass, thousands of kilometers away.

Yesterday I was called to the telegraph office to speak directly with Moscow. It was Ordjonikidze, Assistant to the People's Commissar. He wanted to know if I was absolutely certain that my calculations about the amount of coal were correct. As I was giving my answer, we were disconnected. Maria says it must have been the censorship people who cut us off.

It's been a whole week since I've written anything. I'm completely exhausted. The coal I have found has started a rush of activity. Every organization in the country seems in some way to be concerned with it, and now I no longer know who is responsible to whom. First I get orders from the regional executive committee, then from the G. P. U., and in the end it turns out that it's the G. P. U. that has the last word, the real authority. But they are police, secret police. What do they know about coal?

Berman, Assistant Director of the G. P. U., has just come from Moscow, and he told me it is proposed that we start digging for coal almost immediately. But how's that possible? The place where I found the coal is almost four hundred kilometers from here, Kogocha, where our headquarters are. There are no roads, not even paths. How will they get workers and supplies to the place? How will they get the coal away from the place?

I've been ordered to prepare to leave. Together with a few hundred others I'm to go to the place where I found the coal and stay there for as long as is necessary. It is

now the end of September. If we start out in three or four days we should be there about October 20.

I haven't written a word for more than a month. We left Kogocha on September 28 and arrived in the coal region only about November 1. Our expedition consists mainly of soldiers of the G. P. U. Interior Military Forces. There are more than four hundred of them. There are only about sixty of us in the civilian group. Our transport consisted of hundreds of horse-drawn wagons heavily loaded with food and other supplies. But on each wagon there was *barbed* wire. I'm told the coal is to be dug out by prisoners.

At least half of the soldiers are working with the barbed wire. I hate to think that prisoners will be brought here. The only thing ready for them so far is huge squares of bare land, enclosed by barbed wire, with high watch-towers at each corner. It seems to me sometimes that it's all my fault that masses of ordinary people will be brought here and forced to dig out of the earth the coal that I have discovered. But I tell myself that every one of them will be here for some reason. I have often heard that sometimes people are arrested without cause, but I do not believe this. How is it possible to seize a man, put him in prison and send him to forced labor if he has not committed any crime?

Strange, but all building work seems to have stopped. The big house for us civilians and for the guard is ready, and we have moved in. But what about quarters for the prisoners? They are expected to arrive quite soon. I asked Comrade Vesioly, the head of our party, about this yesterday. After the conversation I felt I had been covered with dirt. He stared at me for quite a while and then said:

"Do you really think that we propose to build quarters for prisoners? Don't you think it would be most unusual for members of the G. P. U. to do such work?"

"But what will happen to them when winter sets in?"

"Let them worry about that themselves. You will see that man is a very hardy animal and can accustom himself to any conditions."

The first column of prisoners, about six thousand of



hem, arrived yesterday. They were marched on foot all the way from Kogocha, a distance of four hundred kilometers. They arrived half dead with fatigue, cold and insufficient food. That is, those that did arrive. The head of the *convoy* reported to Vesioly that he "lost" 150 men on the way.

From a distance I saw how this huge crowd of people crawled into the barbed wire enclosures. Vesioly's order was short. The prisoners were allowed two days to prepare their own dugouts or make a shelter for themselves. On the third day everyone had to start digging coal.

The more I observe the prisoners, the more I talk with them, the more bitter I feel. There are now twenty-four thousand of them. They have nearly all been classified as landowners, but actually they are all simple peasants. Their crime was their unwillingness to give in to the government power that tried to drive them into the collective farms. They wanted to remain masters of their own land, to have in their own yard their own horse and their own cow. They didn't mind if others joined collective farms, but they didn't want to join themselves. So armed men broke into their homes. They and their families were loaded on trains and shipped like cattle to Siberia. On the way, all families were broken up. The bodies of those who died were left by the side of the railway. Those who lived came to the coal regions.

Thank God! Thank God! It's been six weeks since I last wrote—it's not easy to write about the things that go on here. But today something good happened—it's been discovered that there is much less coal here than I thought. There was coal at all of the fourteen places where I made the tests, but in between them there is none. Anyway what it means is that all these thousands of people will now be able to leave the taiga, and so will I. Maybe I shall be disgraced. I don't care. Better that than have all these poor people on my conscience. Maria will understand.

It's becoming warmer. The snow is melting. The food convoys, that until now had been arriving regularly every day, are beginning to arrive late. Today half of the food supply could not get through from Kogocha because the horses could not pull the loads over the melting snow.

The melting snow has caused the rivers to rise above their banks, and the marshes are covered with water. It's now three weeks since any food convoys have come through. The prisoners' rations, never more than barely sufficient to keep them alive, have been cut by half. Today, walking past the burial ground, I counted ninety-two mass graves. Fifty bodies to a grave—that makes nearly five thousand dead!

The decision has been announced to go into the taiga, taking the little that remains of the food with us. The prisoners are to be left to die. It is torture to escape, leaving so many to certain death, but I want to live so much, so very much. Or will Maria turn away from me when she learns I am capable of such selfishness?

How many days have passed since that morning when we loaded the rest of the food on to the carts and tried to get away? I do not know. Perhaps three, perhaps twenty. I have been wandering about, almost out of my mind, dazed and stunned by the shocking events which it has been my awful fate to witness.

As we drove the carts out and into the taiga, the horses found it more and more difficult to pull them through the soft soil; we men found it more and more difficult to help the horses by pushing. Finally, less than ten kilometers from the camp, with both horses and men completely exhausted, we found ourselves at a standstill. And then, behind us, we heard the shouts of the prisoners, growing louder and louder. Driven by hunger they had been following us; they were coming nearer and nearer, a savage army with murder in their hearts.

Vesoly made a quick decision—to wait till the prisoners came close enough and then to massacre them with the machine-guns. When all had been killed we were to return to the camp and set out again in a different direction.

The decision not to shoot came to me suddenly. I remembered Maria and thought that if I did shoot I would never be able to look into her eyes again. I took my rifle and left for the woods. I could not do otherwise.

I had reached the middle of a hill when shouts, groans and the sound of gunfire reached my ears. At the place where our party stopped, Vesoly had placed the men in a semi-circle, as if a real battle against an enemy was

to take place. When the prisoners began to appear among the trees, the first shots stopped them, but only for a few moments. They moved forward again and each step cost them a hundred dead. Soon a carpet of bodies stretched through the forest, but over the carpet those behind still came on. Some fell wounded, but they would rise again and continue, or crawl on hands and knees—as if the food carts were irresistibly pulling them forward. Death no longer meant anything to them. They reached the spot where Vesioly and his men were standing, still firing their guns, and rolled over them, crushing them underfoot. Then there were no more shots. The food from the carts disappeared in an instant. New mobs, crawling up from behind, killed the horses and tore them to pieces, with their bare hands, and chewed the pieces raw. . . . I fled into the taiga.

stepped out of the boat and called out quietly: "Peter . . . Peter . . . where are you, Peter?"

She stopped when she saw the notebook, white against the dark tree trunk. Through the bushes Mark watched her take it down. As she read she began to cry, then she slipped to the ground, as if all the strength had gone out of her. She cried a long time before she at last got up slowly and went to the boat, her head on her chest, bitter misery in her face. She did not row, but let the boat be borne along by the current, while she stared into space, her face shining with the tears which still rolled down her cheeks. Mark watched, unable to tear his eyes away until the boat had disappeared round a bend in the river. Only then did he walk slowly away, bowed down by a new sorrow, certain that what he had read could not but be true, for had he not seen the end of it with his very own eyes?

Twenty thousand dead! Twenty thousand more splinters? Yura . . . Katya . . . now Peter and Maria . . . Perhaps himself?

## Chapter 6

### "No, My Place Is Here!"

FOR MARK SUROV to be given a bad mark in his record for a wrong act on a matter of Communist principle and practice hardly seemed possible. He was a "son of the regiment." He had preached the Communist gospel, had read the Communist Bible to a dying man at the age of thirteen.

But it did happen; he, Mark Surov, was *censured* by the Far East Regional Committee of the ~~Communist~~ Party. And it came about on a question of voting.

an "enemy of the people," and loses also the right to have a good job, the right to get enough food for himself and his family, the right to send his children to school, and many other rights besides. In addition to the loss of all these rights he must pay much higher taxes than anyone else, and often has to give up everything he owns in order to avoid prison or forced labor.

The giving or taking away of the right to vote is thus one of the chief weapons used to achieve two of the government's purposes: one is to bring pressure to bear on the peasants to join the *collective farms*; the other is to ensure a good supply of cheap slave labor to do the work of mining coal, cutting down trees, building roads and so on.

But it has never been quite clear who has the final responsibility or authority for using this weapon. Is it the Government or the Party? If it is the Government which branch of the Government? If it is the Party which organ of the Party?

When Mark arrived in Khabarovsk he found that out of a population of one and a half million persons old enough to vote in the province no less than half a million, one-third of the total, did not have electoral rights, or, in other words, had been put on the list of "non-voters."

It was after reading Peter Novikoff's diary, and just a few weeks before the next elections were to be held, that Mark asked for and obtained permission from the Regional Committee to "report on the position regarding those people from whom the right to vote had been taken away."

At the meeting at which he presented his report he said: "On your instructions, comrades, I have reviewed the list of those persons who have lost their electoral rights. . . . Half a million people have been placed on the list. We all know that when a person is placed on this list he is automatically classified as an enemy of the people. It seems to me impossible that in a province with only one and a half million possible voters there should be half a million enemies of the Soviet people. Comrade Stalin had taught us that when we are in a difficulty we should rely on the people's wisdom. I therefore propose that we should ask the workers themselves, through their own organizations, to *revise* the list."

Mark's proposal was accepted by the Committee. When revised by the workers themselves the list of non-voters

was reduced from half a million names to sixty-seven thousand names.

Immediately after the elections Mark had a visitor in his office. It was Comrade Yuzhny, a high G. P. U. official.

"I want to return to this question of revising the voting list," Yuzhny began. "Don't you think, Comrade Surov, that a very serious mistake has been made?"

"No, Comrade Yuzhny, I don't. As you know, the people themselves, by greatly reducing the number, changed the administration's work very thoroughly."

"Your reference to the people does not free you from responsibility, Comrade Surov," Yuzhny said. "We shall see what sort of people corrected the Party's work."

"The Party's work!" exclaimed Mark. "The first list was drawn up by the administrative organs of the Government, not by the Party."

"That makes no difference, no difference whatever. The Party is the administration. The Party is us."

"So far as I know you are the G. P. U., which is only an organ of the Party."

Yuzhny sat thinking for a moment and then said, in an unusually quiet tone:

"Formally you are right of course. The G. P. U. is not the Party, but a sword in the Party's hand. But that is no excuse for doing what you have done."

"I am not trying to excuse myself. I have only carried out Party instructions."

"The instructions must be changed."

"As they haven't been changed so far I must carry them out." And there the conversation ended.

A week later Mark went to see Vavilov, secretary of the Regional Committee.

"I've just been informed that the Party Committee has passed a vote of censure on me," he said. "Is that correct?"

"Yes."

Vavilov listened to Mark's protest in silence. Then he took out a letter from the local G. P. U. which proposed that Mark Surov should be punished for interfering with the work of the G. P. U. in drawing up the list. "After he has been expelled from the Party," the letter ended, "the G. P. U. will see that he answers for his conduct." The letter was signed by Yuzhny.

Then Vavilov handed Mark another letter—the Committee's reply. "The Regional Party Committee . . . taking into account the fact that Mark Surov is a very young member of the Party . . . and has made this mistake owing to insufficient Party experience, has decided to limit itself to passing a Party vote of censure on him."

"You see, Mark," said Vavilov, "if we hadn't passed the vote of censure Yuzhny would have taken the matter into his own hands and things would have been far worse for you. We did the best we could. Let's leave it at that. In these days we have to know when to bend, when to take a roundabout way to an object. You can't always go straight ahead. Get that clear, Mark. I have long noted that you're too hot, too outspoken. You haven't any sense of fear."

"But I'm in my own country. What have I got to fear?"

"That's quite true. But our country is like a horse which is rising on its hind legs; it can easily crush its own offspring. I'm not in a foreign country either, am I? Yet I'm afraid. There's a lot that I'm afraid of . . ."

Vavilov seemed to realize that he had said too much; he closed his mouth and shook his head. "Good-by," he murmured. And Mark left.

Late one night Mark was called to Vavilov's office. He found Vavilov talking to Dorinas, the chief G. P. U. representative for the Far East, about the collective farms into which all the peasants were to be driven, by Stalin's order. Vavilov was saying that it was now possible to report to Moscow that in the area for which he was responsible no less than ninety-seven per cent of the peasants had been persuaded to join the collective farms.

Dorinas turned to Mark:

"I have asked Comrade Vavilov," he said, "to send you to the River Zee district to assist Comrade Bayenko, who had been given special orders by Comrade Stalin in connection with the preparation of *timber* for export. We have reason to believe that he badly needs your help there for a short time. That is all."

The truck that took Mark to the Zee district let him off at Kholodny, where there was a small gold-mining center. There he found the mine-director waiting for him. "Comrade Surov?" he said. "I was informed that you would be passing through and would spend the night here. I am very glad to have you as my guest. Comrade Bay-

enko is out at the headquarters of the *lumber* camps, some fifteen miles from here. We'll take you out to him tomorrow. Things aren't too good here," he went on. "Since we changed over to working the mine with prisoners we've had to send away all our wives and children. Would you like to see the mine?"

Mark followed the director out and around the camp. Here, for the first time in his experience, he saw women prisoners being used to do even the heaviest manual work. Most of the men, too, were not of the peasant type, but middle-class professional people, such as teachers and doctors, from the towns. Among them he recognized Borodin, once a professor of history at Moscow University.

On their way back to the office the Director told Mark that in accordance with regulations he would have to go to Razin, the chief of the local G. P. U., and obtain permission to remain in the mine area. "It's only a matter of form," the director said, "Comrade Razin must know you are here, for it was he who issued the order to have you brought by truck. But the formality has to be observed."

The director went on to his office, and Mark made his way to Razin's house—a small attractive building which stood not far from the block of prison barracks. The house was quiet; there seemed to be nobody about. Pushing open the front door he called out:

"Is anybody in?"

From inside a woman's voice replied:

"Come in . . . Comrade Surov."

The voice sounded strangely familiar, but it was too dark in the hallway for him to see who it was. He followed the woman into a larger room off the hall. Turning, he saw a thin, wasted face, like the face of one who has been ill or underfed a long time. The bloodless lips were twisted into a miserable, uneasy smile. The large, grey, mournful eyes were fixed on him, as if they were asking a question.

"Lena!"

They stood staring at each other, not knowing what to say. She was wearing a simple black dress with short sleeves, and had cheap town shoes on her feet. Her breasts, which had once been full and firm, now hung loosely, like those of a woman who has borne many children. Tears were gathering in her eyes. Her lips parted in a desperate attempt to speak, but the words came with difficulty:



"Yes . . . it's me . . . I knew . . . you were coming . . . I was waiting for you, Mark Surov."

"What have they done to you?" he cried bitterly. "Lena, what are you doing here?"

"I've had two years in concentration camps . . . I thought you wouldn't want to recognize me . . ."

She started to cry and sat down on the edge of a sofa, her head sunk on her chest. Mark sat down beside her and laid his hand on her knee. "Tell me, Lena, how did you get here? How did it all happen?" he said.

At last she stopped crying and smiled miserably.

"I got here like everybody else," she said. And she went on to tell how her brother, an underground revolutionary worker and an old Bolshevik, had been arrested and shot. When that happens suspicion falls on all the members of the family. Lena had been sent to Siberia. The mine was the fifth stage on her journey from prison to prison. She had had no proper trial and no term of imprisonment had been passed on her.

You had to fight for your life in the camp, fight desperately, Lena told him. It was beyond a woman's strength. The women in the camps tried to find protectors among their guards. If a woman didn't get herself a lover—say one of the officers, or, even a cook—she was tortured with heavy labor and put to work in the colder places. So the women went from one man to another. Lena, too, had taken that path. "Razin is my third," she said; and as Mark started away in horror he caught again in her eyes that fearless, challenging look that had at one time never left them. "I know that it's horrible, but am I or the other women to blame for it?" she asked. "We want to live."

They heard someone coming outside, and Lena got up quickly. "That's Razin," she said. "He mustn't see me here. But listen, Mark, promise me you'll do one thing. Don't spend the night here or with the director. Go on to the next village. Call at the third house on the left. Ask for Khanin. They'll be waiting for you."

"Who will be waiting?"

She hurried out of the room without answering. Outside he could hear Razin taking off his outdoor clothes in the hall.

"Lena, where are you?" a thick voice reached Mark's ears.

The door opened and Razin came in. He was an

enormous man of about forty. His mouth was hidden beneath "Stalin" whiskers, his thick hair was sprinkled with grey, his nose was broad and shapeless. As Mark rose to meet him Razin looked at him carefully out of the corner of his eye.

"I've just come in to thank you for sending the truck to the station for me," Mark said.

"That's nothing to thank me for," Razin thundered in his loud voice. "Your chief, Comrade Bayenko, asked for it."

"Can you tell me how I can get to Comrade Bayenko tomorrow?"

"That's easy; I'll order an automobile for you. But meanwhile take your coat off and we'll have some supper."

"Thank you very much, but I have a bit of work to do in the next village and I'm in a hurry. If it isn't any trouble will you please arrange for the car to pick me up there early in the morning?"

"Certainly," Razin said. "But it's a long walk to the village and it's getting dark. I'll get my driver to take you." And he called out instructions to the driver.

Arriving at the edge of the village Mark got out and told the driver to go back. By now it was completely dark, and lights were burning in some of the windows. The third house on the left proved to be a small hut with two windows, both of them tightly shuttered. He crossed the yard and went up to the door. But before he could knock, the door opened and a voice said "Come in!"

"Is this Khanin's house?" Mark asked.

"I am Khanin," somebody said. "Come in!" And whoever it was stepped aside for Mark to pass.

Mark knew that in entering an unknown house in a lonely, unknown village at night he was doing a very dangerous thing, but he had perfect confidence in Lena and without fear followed the man into a plain peasant's room. At a rough unpolished table in the corner there was sitting a young man about his own age. Mark walked across to the table.

"Do you recognize me, Comrade Surov?"

Mark stood still, astonishment and disbelief written on his face.

"Alexander!"

"So you do recognize me!"

Alexander's face broke into a happy smile. Mark seized him by the shoulders and shook him. "How on earth did you come to be here? Is it really you?"

Alexander had been a student at Moscow University while Mark was there. He had taken even less part in politics than Mark, but for a different reason. His only interest was in good literature, chiefly poetry. Since he was peace-loving by nature he had always been distressed by the stormy arguments between Yura and Mark, and had tried to bring them to an end by some laughing remark. Then Alexander had disappeared suddenly. He had organized a literary competition for the most amusing story about University life. A number of students sent in entries but his own was judged to be the first. However, his story, which indirectly made fun of the government, met with the disfavor of the higher authorities; he was arrested and sent to a concentration camp.

Although it was about that time that Mark had strengthened himself by his discovery of the "You can't chop wood without making splinters" philosophy, he had gone to the Public Prosecutor's office and handed in a request that his friend's case be reconsidered. But nothing came of it.

"It's me all right," Alexander laughed. He made no attempt to break away from the strong grip of his old University friend. "But you, you get just as excited as ever, Mark. You're shaking me as though you were shaking apples off a tree!"

Mark let him go, but Alexander seized his hand and kept shaking it up and down, crying, "Hill never meets hill, but man and man are always meeting."

"And smashing in each other's faces," Mark added.

"Quite possibly. But as far as you and I are concerned that can come later. I saw Lena today and she told me that Razin had received an order to meet a Comrade Surov. She thought it might be you, but remembering how many brothers you have we could not be sure. We'd heard you had become very important, and were working in this area. I hope you won't be angry, Mark," he went on quietly, "but naturally we couldn't help wondering whether we could trust you. After she had talked to you Lena felt, and now I feel too, that though you're a Party member and all that you haven't changed, and even though we may disagree we can still be friends. What do you say?"

When Alexander began to speak, Mark had sat down. As he listened, his head sank lower and lower on his chest and he kept his eyes fixed on the table. He felt insulted by his friend's words but he couldn't condemn them. Fear had crept into men's souls and had taken possession of them. People had begun to think that man and man were dangerous to each other, and so they shut themselves off. When Alexander had finished speaking there was a silence. Finally Mark pulled himself together and said "Good! Maybe you were not entirely unjust in doubting me. But let us agree that in spite of everything we will remain friends and we will never forget that friendship."

"If that's the way you feel," replied Alexander . . . he stopped short. Somebody was approaching the house. Whoever it was knocked on the window, scratched twice, and then knocked again. Alexander went to the door. There, he turned:

"Don't speak, Mark, and don't breathe!" he said. "You're going to meet another animal who has crossed your path before."

When he returned he was followed by a man in a heavy sheepskin coat. The man was so tall that he had to bend his head to avoid hitting the top of the door frame. When he took off his cap Mark saw a longish face with a sharp straight nose and calm watchful eyes. He knew he had seen this man before; he tried desperately to remember where. Then it came to him;

"Ostap?" he breathed the question. Without thinking he rushed to meet the Cossack to whom he had once given his horse, and they joined their arms in a strong embrace. Alexander stood beside them, smacking each of them on the back in turn and saying, almost shyly:

"Friends meet again. I don't care what large or small say it in; that's got a good sound to it."

Meanwhile the old man Khanin was sitting at the table with the roasted meat on the table. Then he picked up a piece of bread which he had cut. Finally, with a long sigh, he bent down and pulled a bottle of vodka out from under the bed.

ment, shot the village leaders, and shipped all who refused to be collectivized to concentration camps in Siberia. It was Alexander who had helped him to escape, and since then they had never been separated. When he had finished Mark said:

"Now I understand more clearly why you were afraid to trust me. But you need have no fear. . . . Above all we are friends, and apart from that there has been too much suffering already . . . too much blood flowing everywhere."

"Then how can you remain a Communist official?" Ostap demanded.

"Because all that has happened to you and Alexander and Lena and millions of others still does not mean that Communism is wrong or that our faith is bad. What it does mean is that we've turned off the straight road, and now we are trying to find our way through a pathless wilderness. It's dark, and we keep falling and making mistakes, taking the wrong direction. But we must go on looking. The gods won't show us the road; they are silent, and man must carve out his own road. You hate what is happening in our country, but if you destroyed it you would not know how to build up anything in its place."

"Surely you're not trying to excuse everything that goes on; surely you don't accept all of it?" Ostap asked sadly. "Do you accept the violence done to the people? Do you accept the concentration camps? They've driven freedom into the grave, and man can't even breathe."

"No," replied Mark, "there is a lot that I cannot accept. Power has gone to men's heads, and they're like angry bulls, treading down everything in their way. Violence has become a part of everyday life. It has gone beyond what is necessary, and has become a habit. That is not through communism; that's through people. They were slaves, and a slave's idea of freedom is to have power over others. We are all slaves more or less . . . I am not saying all this as an excuse. It is terribly painful for me too, and if it were not for our Communist faith life would be horrible."

"If you really do believe that, Mark," said Alexander, "then your faith gives you strength to accept a great deal of wrong. But . . . forgive me . . . I don't think your faith is so unshakable. You seem almost to be arguing with yourself. Faith grew up with you, you grew up with

your faith, and now it's difficult for you to live without it. But you'll never find the strength to drive all doubt away. I think you've got a hard road before you . . . But tell me, what would you think of somebody who suddenly stepped aside from all that is happening in our country? Would you condemn him? Suppose, let us say, he fled from Russia?"

"I would say of any man who left his native soil that he was a *deserter* who had fled from the field of battle, forgetting the land entrusted to him by his fathers and forefathers."

Ostap angrily struck the table with the fork he had been playing with. "That's all very well, but, damn it, suppose his land has been taken away from him. Suppose he goes away from the land in which he is not allowed to live in order to fight for it? How is he a deserter then?"

"I would still say he's a deserter. . . . After all, the people are learning to accept the new system. Only the other day I heard that ninety-seven percent of the peasants here have agreed to be collectivized."

"Yes, they have agreed," cried Ostap, "because Yuzhny brought up his G. P. U. forces and was ready to drown the area in blood. But the peasants carried out orders and joined the collective farms, so there's nothing for him to do. He shot a few all the same, those who didn't have the strength or the patience to wait."

"Wait for what?" Mark asked.

"Man is always waiting for something," Ostap replied mysteriously.

Some distance away there was the sound of a horn. It was the car which had been sent for Mark. As he was putting on his coat he said, "Do help Lena all you can, and on my way back we'll talk over how we can fight to get her free."

"It certainly is very necessary to free her," said Alexander thoughtfully. "She cannot last out much longer. There is a place not far from here where all condemned prisoners are shot. That's where Razin was all day yesterday. Then he comes home and Lena, knowing where he has been and what he has been doing, has to sleep with him. But we'll fight for Lena," he said, "don't you worry."

Mark shook hands with Alexander and Ostap. "We'll meet again before long," he said, as he left to go to the car. He did not seem to hear Ostap's quiet remark: "No, Mark, we shan't meet again."

At the lumber camp, which was very near the boundary line which divides Soviet Russia from Chinese Manchuria, Mark found that the huge trees were being cut down not only by prisoners, but also by farmers who, having been forced into the collectives, had now been "persuaded" to "volunteer" for this work.

Because timber was one of the few things that could be exported, in exchange for much-needed imports, Stalin had started an intensive campaign to increase its production, and had put important officials like Bayenko in charge of the work. On inspecting conditions in the camp, accompanied by Bayenko, Mark found that the collective farmers were being treated very little better than the prisoners. For some reason even their food had been stopped. When they asked why, the Camp Director led them to a long shed, on the floor of which lay a great heap of timber.

At first sight this heap seemed no different from the other timber which was piled up high outside, but closer examination revealed that each piece had a small patch which had been cleared of *bark* and was covered with lettering. On one of them they read, "This timber has been cut by slaves. We are dying. There are millions of us Russians in concentration camps. Save us!" On another were the words: "When you buy this timber, you are buying our blood."

"That's why the bread was stopped this morning," said the director. "And when I find out who's been doing this . . ." He did not finish the sentence.

That same night, while Mark and Bayenko were sleeping in the lumber camp, something was going on in the house where Mark had met Alexander and Ostap. One by one a small group of men—mostly bearded peasants with weather-beaten faces—had assembled in the kitchen.

When all had arrived Ostap announced: "Today is Wednesday. Operations will begin at eight o'clock Saturday evening. Alexander will now read out the instructions again."

Alexander began to read the instructions: "The people of the village of Kramarovo, which is nearest to the frontier, will move off to the border first. At 9:45 p.m. sixty-four of our armed men will attack the frontier post at Bolshaya Luka. When they have killed the twenty guards

who are on duty there they will split into two forces. One force will go right, to the village of Bataninô; the other will go left, to the settlement of Gremechy. At each of these two places the guards will be killed and the villagers will be informed that anyone who wants to cross into Manchuria can do so at any point along a three-mile stretch of open frontier. The Chinese side is almost unguarded, but if there is any attempt to stop us, the Chinese are to be bound or driven off.

"The column of prisoners released from the mine will pass through under cover of the villages of Rybachy and Rybachy. Is everything clear?"

"Quite clear!"



saw a pistol pointing at him. Seized with terror he slipped down to his knees, begging for his life. Ostap shot, and Razin slid to the floor. When the body was quite still, Ostap went out. Now Lena joined them. As they left the house a red light began to spread through the sky. Tongues of flame burst from the director's house. The barracks and the guards' quarters were burning also. The whole camp was on fire.

"I'll go to the women," Lena said.

"Yes, do, Lena," Ostap replied.

Mark and Bayenko were sleeping in a small village that Saturday night, some kilometers distant from the lumber camp. About midnight they were awakened by guards sent by the director.

"What's the matter?" asked Mark, who was the first to awake.

"There's been a rising at the Kholodny mining center and the villages near there. The camp director has sent us to secure your safety."

A few minutes later they were driving away. Bayenko insisted that the officer in charge of the guards sit with him, and as there was room for only two persons Mark mounted the officer's horse. As he rode his mind turned to those at the mine and in the village where he had met Alexander and Ostap. Would they be able to help Lena? Beside Mark was riding one of the guards.

"How far is it to the mining center?" Mark suddenly asked him.

"About fifteen miles; but less than twelve if you take the direct road," he answered. "If you follow that track there it will bring you out on the main road to the mine."

Mark turned off into the taiga and came out on the main road. In the distance he could now see a fiery glow in the sky, and he knew that the camp was in flames. He had no idea what he would do at the camp when he got there, but he whipped the tired horse on. He saw Lena's pale face before him, and it drew him on with irresistible force.

Suddenly the horse came to a stop, rising on its hind legs. A voice shouted "Halt!" Before Mark could pull out his pistol someone had seized him round the waist and dragged him out of the saddle. He tried to resist, but was gripped by several men. In a moment his hands were tied behind him and he was pushed back to a tree. Three men,

breathing heavily, stared at him with hatred in their eyes. One of them searched through his pockets and took out his pistol and documents. Lighting a match he read out slowly: "Party card, number—Mark Surov, Communist Party member."

The dancing light of the flames playing on Mark's face revealed that he was smiling a strange, broad, joyous smile. One of his captors began to shout with rage: "What are you laughing at, you Communist rat. We're going to kill you, and you're smiling!" But the smile did not leave Mark's face. Angered by it the peasant lifted his heavy rifle and brought it down on Mark's head; Mark slowly slipped down the trunk and lay motionless at its foot.

When he regained consciousness he saw above him a woman's face, amazingly familiar, lit up by the flames. "He's opening his eyes," she said, and a gentle hand wiped the blood off his cheek.

"Where am I?" he asked thickly.

"They had just decided to hang him when I rode up," Alexander's voice said. "I took him across my saddle and brought him in." Then Ostap's voice, calm and businesslike: "Is his head smashed?"

Alexander's voice: "I don't think so."

Supporting himself on the woman's arm, Mark sat up. Now he realized that it was Lena. Seeing Ostap and Alexander standing behind her, he understood all. And once more an unexpected smile played over his face. "So we've met again after all," he said. "Well, are you going to hang me? Or will you shoot me, because I was a soldier?" he asked jeeringly.

Ostap went up to him and stared into his eyes. "Don't laugh, Mark. This is no time for laughing. We aren't going to kill you; we know of nothing you've done to deserve it."

Mark's face turned pale and miserable. Lena bent over him, and as she wiped away the blood he saw she was crying.

"You mean you won't kill me?" he asked.

"We give you a choice, Mark," Alexander said. "You can stay here, or come with us. You know now what has happened. The frontier villages are going over to the other side of the river, to Manchuria. That's the peasants' answer to violence. The people are seeking their freedom,

and in the name of freedom they are leaving their native land. Come with us, Mark."

"No, I can't go with you," Mark said quietly. "My place is here, on this soil . . ."

Alexander caught the sound of tears gathering in Mark's voice, and he felt a deep tenderness for his old friend. Gently and warmly he said, "You won't go with us, Mark, I know that, but at least let us part as friends. And tell me, before we go, why were you laughing, just now, and in front of the men on the road?"

Mark was still holding Lena's hand, and it seemed as if he now spoke only to her. "I thought it was the end, that then everything would be clear. Mark Surov had lived, he had fought for the Soviet regime, and he had died for it. What could be clearer and more definite than that? You understand, Lena?"

"I understand, Mark," she whispered. "You wanted to avoid the future in which you no longer believed. You are afraid to admit that you are at a dead end, and that death would be a way out for you. You think that if you *died at the hands of your party's enemies* you would be worthy of your father and the men in uniform you remember so well. But you're making a mistake—a terrible and bitter mistake."

"I've already made the mistake, Lena," he said quietly, pressing his cheek against her hand.

"Come with us," she begged. "I've always loved you, Mark."

He passed his eyes slowly over the burning camp, over the taiga, over the sky sprinkled with red sparks, over Ostap and Alexander. Then he smiled bitterly at Lena and said, "No, my place is here."

## Chapter 7

### Return to Moscow

THE EVENTS AT THE Kholodny mining center were to prove a turning point in Mark's life. Of the develop-

ents which followed them, the first and most important as the change in his own thinking and outlook.

"I've already made the mistake," he had said. It is when a man is most deeply moved that all pretense falls away; then self-deceit is no longer possible. The words had been forced out of him by a series of shocks—first the shock of the revolt itself, which showed the depth of the hatred of the peasants for the Soviet regime; then the shock of discovering that it had been organized by his own friends; and finally the shock of having to admit that if it were the only way to save Lena's life and their own lives Ostap and Alexander had been right to organize it.

What exactly was the mistake he had made? "You can't chop wood without making splinters." Was that the mistake? Perhaps he was beginning to see that in a society which excuses "splinters" as a necessary evil there can be no end to injustice and bloodshed. Every person, every nation, has and always will have wood to chop, and if even one splinter, in terms of a Peter or a Lena, is permitted then why not ten or a hundred or a thousand or a million? Where is it to stop?

"When the gods are silent man has to find his own path." Was that part of the mistake too? Were the gods really silent? Was there only the path of Karl Marx and Lenin and no others? Had there not been, in the history of man, other leaders who had pointed out a more merciful, a less bloody path to better living?

Nevertheless, though he had admitted his mistake, he still felt he had been right to remain within the system, so long as he was free to try to change it, just as his friends, with no such freedom, had been right to escape from it. But how could he hope to be able to do anything to change it? Did not his wish to die show that he had no such hope? To these questions there were as yet no answers.

In the weeks that followed Kholodny, Mark had time and freedom to recover from these shocks, and to think out more deeply the questions to which there seemed to be no answers. Vavilov sent him on a mission to the small island of Sakhalin, off the Manchurian coast. During the journey in the small coastal steamer from Vladivostok to Sakhalin, and during the days on the island itself, Mark spent his time in painful thought. Still no answers. But on the return voyage something happened.

The small steamer stopped at many points along the coast to pick up passengers and goods. Among those who got on at one such point were an elderly man, of studious appearance, with his daughter and her baby. Mark felt sure that he had seen the girl before, but he did not remember who she was until he saw her standing near him by the rail, with the baby in her arms, staring fixedly at the faint shoreline of a distant island which the ship was just passing.

"See that island?" one of the sailors said to him. "It's a leper island. Lepers there from all over the world, they say. Glad I'm not one of them. Ugh!"

Of course! It was Maria. How sorrow had changed her! Again, in his mind's eye, he saw the river bank, the diary of Peter Novikoff, the girl drifting downstream in the boat while the tears poured down her face. Even as Mark turned to look at her again the strength seemed suddenly to drain away from her, and if he had not rushed to take the baby away from her arms she would surely have dropped it.

He took her down to his room and made her lie down on the bed. Exhausted, she fell asleep quickly, with the baby beside her. Mark went back outside and walked about aimlessly, his heart bleeding with pity. There, just a few kilometers away, was the island Peter was on; perhaps already he was withering with the disease, or dead. And below, in the cabin, was the girl Peter had loved and had been going to marry, with the baby he had never seen. Why? Why? Why? Because he had discovered coal? Because he could not bear to shoot down innocent "splinters?" Because he had been the unwilling witness of horrors so great that all knowledge and memory of them had to be wiped out forever?

When Mark went back to his room, some time later, the woman was awake.

"Are we near Vladivostok?" she asked.

"Yes, Maria, we are just entering the harbor," he replied, and he began to pack his belongings.

"How do you know my name?" she asked in surprise.

"By a strange chance . . . I happened to be in Khabarovsk that day . . . on the river bank, the day Peter went off . . . after he had left you. . . . You were in a boat . . ."

"You were there?" And, as if suddenly reminded once again of the bitterness of that day, "Oh God!" she whispered, and dropped her head in her hands.

"Yes," said Mark, gently. "It was terrible for you, but I think your Peter was right. He knew that if he went there he had no right to take you with him." •

She looked away.

Sometime later, as they were all waiting to get off the boat, she introduced him to her father. He was a Professor Zamkin, head of a survey group.

"Are you leaving Vladivostok today?" she asked Mark, and he thought that in her eyes he read a hope that he was not. To his own surprise, for he had planned to leave immediately, he replied, "No, I'm stopping over the night, and going tomorrow . . . or the day after."

"If you haven't anywhere to stay perhaps you would like to come with us. Our expedition has its own permanent quarters here, and I'm sure we could find room for you, couldn't we, father?"

Zamkin gave her a quick but loving look. "Oh, of course. As it happens I have to go on a journey inland at once. He can have my room."

From the harbor they went straight to Maria's small room. After attending to the baby Maria made tea, and she and Mark sat down at the table, just as darkness was falling. Her face was sad and troubled.

Here, thought Mark, was another lonely helpless creature, another bird whose wings had been broken. He rose from the table and put his hands on her shoulders. As he did so he felt her tremble violently. She raised her head and looked at him. And as they looked at each other a smile began to light up in her eyes and to spread over her face. He lifted her up and took her in his arms, and she rested against him, began to kiss him on his face, his neck. Overcome by the woman's hunger and by his own longing for happiness he held her tightly. As he lifted her in his arms and carried her to the bed she kissed him again and again. Clinging to her, he let himself sink into this new happiness, a happiness long untested, let himself believe that it was Katya he had in his arms. But in that one strange indescribable moment when a man ceases to be conscious of himself, when everything else in the world falls away, he heard her almost delirious cry:

"Peter, my beloved!"

His dream was broken, and he realized that she too had been in a dream of make-believe. Clinging to him with all her now-satisfied body she fell asleep. But Mark lay awake.

"What about tomorrow?" he thought as he lay beside her. "Tomorrow she'll see I'm not Peter; she'll realize that some complete stranger had stolen that which belonged to him, perhaps only to forget her ever after. Will she understand? Will she forgive?"

Very quietly he dressed. By the light of the moon he wrote a note:

"I feel that I've stolen something I've no right to. All you have given me this night belongs to another. All the same I am happy and deeply grateful.

"You know my name and where to find me in Khabarovsk. I dare not make any proposal to you, but if you feel that you can accept me, I promise to be a faithful husband to you and a good father to little Peter. I know I have no right to ask you for love. But we are both lonely, and perhaps if we join each other in our loneliness together we can drive it away. I shall wait for you. . . ."

He slipped out of the house, and an hour later was on a train for Khabarovsk.

As soon as Mark arrived at Khabarovsk Vavilov sent for him to tell him he was to be sent to Moscow immediately. This was the third outcome of Kholodny.

"You know as well as I do," he said, "what caused the revolt, but as usual the G. P. U. have managed to throw off the responsibility for what happened and have fastened it on to me. So I'm to be dismissed. If I go and you stay it won't be long before the man who takes my place starts making things very unpleasant for you. So in your absence I have managed to get you a job in Moscow. I expect you'll be working in the central government administration in the Kremlin. Volkov, who is in charge of one of the departments, has been asking for you for some time. I don't suppose you'll get much joy out of the work, but still . . ."

Mark was silent. Unlikely though it was, he had been hoping that sooner or later Maria would reply to his letter and that he might even see her again. But if he was in Moscow, thousands of kilometers away, what chance would there be? At the same time he knew that what Vavilov had said was true. As Vavilov's chief assistant he could expect nothing but trouble from the new secretary. At last he said:

"I'll need at least a week to settle my personal affairs."

Vavilov looked at him sharply and said:

"Even that may be dangerous, but I'll give you one week and no more."

Then his face softened and he said in a warmer tone:

"And so we're parting, Mark. I want to thank you; you've always been a good worker and a reliable assistant."

"I've tried to do a good job," Mark replied. "It didn't always turn out well, I know, but . . ."

"I know. The result didn't always depend on you, so that wasn't your fault. These days you never know what's going to come of the best of work. It's the fault of the times."

"Of the times?" Mark exclaimed. "I always thought it was man who created the conditions of the times, that he was their master, not their slave."

"Where politics are concerned, man is the slave of his times. Only someone very fearless and determined tries to go against them. But how many men are like that?"

He got up and came round his desk to where Mark was sitting. "I hope we meet again," he said, "if the system doesn't crush one or the other of us. Try not to let it crush you. . . ." He shook Mark's hand.

Late that night Mark sat in the telegraph room waiting for a reply to his message to Professor Zamkin, asking him where his daughter Maria Torpeva was.

The answer came back: "She left three days ago for her new post in Turkestan. She is on her way now."

So once more his hopes had deceived him. Maria must have passed through Khabarovsk by train while he was there. The realization that she did not want to see him again left him with a crushing feeling of loneliness. Two days later he left the city and the Far East.

As Mark's train approached the platform at Moscow station he saw through the carriage window his mother, a little woman in black, waiting for him. Kornei, using his high connections, had arranged a place for Mark to live in Moscow. Their mother took Mark to a house in a quiet side-street, led him up to the third floor, and opened a door leading to a small two-roomed apartment. In overpopulated Moscow even such a small apartment was a whole kingdom.

The next two weeks were spent in establishing himself, both at the Party Central Committee offices in the center of the city and in the Kremlin itself. During those two



weeks he filled up more forms and answered more questions than in all the rest of his life. Again and again his papers, his photograph and his signature were checked, rechecked and checked again, so that everyone could be quite sure that he really was the Mark Surov who had been the "son of the regiment" and had now been given a job in the central government administration.

What this work was to be he had no idea until his meeting with Volkov in the Kremlin. That in itself was a big surprise. For the little old man who came forward to greet him, as he was shown into the office, turned out to be none other than the Peresvetov who had been sent down to the Ukraine to organize political education among the regiments of Budenny's Cavalry Army. He it was who had first sent Mark to "school," and in so doing had set him on the path to service in the official ranks of communism.

After shaking Mark's hand again and again he turned him to the light, rose on his toes and tried to stroke his head, as he had been in the habit of doing at the hospital. But then he remembered that Mark was no longer a boy, and he drew his hand away with an ashamed smile.

"Forgive me, Mark," he said, "but you remind me so much of those old times. You still look like the hot-headed lad we called the son of the regiment. How old

to defend himself against the blows of that rush of words. In all the world Mark had found the one man to whom he could pour out everything.

When he had finished, the old man, going straight to the heart of the matter, asked him:

"Tell me, in spite of all this is your faith still strong in the truth of our cause?"

Mark's head sank on his chest. He thought for a long time and then he said quietly: "Do I still believe? I don't know. At present I see only one thing: there is much evil all around us. Senseless, harmful evil that weighs down on my faith and crushes it. And I don't accept that evil; I don't believe it's necessary. Like everybody else I used to say to myself that you can't chop wood without making splinters. But now I see so many splinters that nothing is left of the Communist forest; there is nothing left to build with. You can't build with splinters. I've even thought of dropping out of the Party in order to have time and freedom to think out a way of defending our great faith from the evil that comes from our own selves. For if we don't defend it and our faith dies then we shall have nothing to live by . . ."

Volkov rose to his feet. Whispering in Mark's ear he said nervously; rapidly:

"I understand you, Mark; perhaps I understand you better than you understand yourself. My generation is guilty before your generation and before you; for we taught you to have faith but we didn't teach you how to defend your faith. . . . The most terrible thing of all is that we, the old men who taught you, we also do not know. . . . But get this into your head and remember it, my boy. Nobody has any right to abandon the Party; otherwise the only members left in it will be the bad ones, the wicked ones. I won't say any more now; perhaps I've already said too much. But you are not to leave the Party. In many ways you are the same as when I first knew you, when everything was clearer and there weren't the doubts that we have now. I am glad . . . But now I must tell you what your duties will be."

As Volkov explained them these duties were very simple. The various Republics of the Soviet Union sent monthly reports on their work to the central government. Mark was to study these, put them together and make a combined report on the effect of central

activity on the local governments. In addition to this he would be given special assignments from time to time.

A Kremlin guard looked into the room and asked Mark to follow him. "I expect the Head of the First Department wishes to see you," the old man explained, as the guard went out of the room. "You must receive your first lesson on how an official in the Kremlin is expected to behave." He was right. Mark was conducted to the office of the Head of the First Department.

"You are to listen to the following instructions and learn them by heart," he was told. "To begin with you must clearly understand that on this floor you turn only to the right, never to the left. To the left are Comrade Stalin's personal offices. You are never to talk anywhere or to anyone about the position of the various rooms and apartments in the Kremlin. You are forbidden to interest yourself in the personal life of the leaders, and if you learn anything you are not to pass it on to anybody; if you do you will find yourself in trouble. You may not leave the Kremlin during office hours unless you first give notice to a certain number on the telephone. While at work you must make use only of the Kremlin private exchange; if you have to telephone anyone outside the Kremlin you must ask the operator to get the number for you. You understand everything?" the officer asked.

"Perfectly!" Mark said with relief, thinking that this brought the instructions to an end. But it was not so.

"Good! Now we'll go on to the next point. You must be very careful in your personal life. . . . Women, my dear Comrade Surov, are the source of many evils. I'll speak to you as man to man. At your age a woman is necessary. The best thing would be for you to get married. Perhaps you have someone in mind?"

"No, nobody," Mark answered.

"That's a pity," the officer sighed. "If you don't intend to get married, how do you propose to arrange your relations with women? So far as we know you're not the sort to indulge in light affairs. Your feeling about the girl that the Japanese carried off in Khabarovsk shows that. But I must say that lighter affairs have many advantages. A woman you have no respect for will never find out more than you allow her to. If light affairs have no attraction for you we must regard you as a dangerous character. For you may fall in love, and men like you

go very far when they're in love. If we approve of your choice, all well and good; but if we should happen to think the lady unsuitable the story might have an unhappy ending."

"I rather think all this conversation is unnecessary," Mark said quietly. "I don't think it's probable that I'll fall in love, so your fears are groundless."

"My work, Comrade Surov, is to foresee all undesirable developments and, if possible, prevent them. So long as you are not married we shall have to know in advance where and with whom you propose to spend your spare time. If you pass time in other people's company we must know what is happening in that company. If you have visitors at home you must inform us, reporting it to the telephone number I have just given you. And always among your guests there'll be one whom you have not invited, but you must receive him. I think that will be enough for now."

Mark had not been working in the Kremlin for many weeks before he found himself completely miserable, in fact in the depths of despair. The work was not to his taste at all. He felt like a man who has been carried to the top of a very high hill. Below him a battle of peoples is going on, but at the top where he is standing there is complete silence. Not a sound of the battle, not a breath of wind reaches him. It was like being in a kingdom of death. Yet he felt that he did not really belong to that dead world. His world was below, where people were building and destroying, destroying and building, in terrible suffering.

Volkov never said much; only in his kind, sharp eyes did Mark read the command: "Look and know!"

"I want to get out of the Kremlin," Mark said to him one day. "I'm not suited to this sort of work. Every day I feel as though I'm committing a crime. I feel so cut off from the world. . . . I simply can't go on. Please help me to get out."

others have, to get experience you could get nowhere else. And that will be of value to you in the future. Among the people you can see only a short distance, and there are certain things that need to be observed a long way off. Observe and learn."

So Mark continued to observe, and to learn. What he learned was that no real "government" existed in Moscow. The well-known leaders whose names were frequently in the newspapers were not the government, though they were commonly regarded as such. They held meetings, they received visitors; but they and their visitors knew it was all pretense. They could decide nothing. All important decisions, without exception, were made in Stalin's office. From there flowed all the decrees regulating the life of the country, all the appointments, all the rewards, all the punishments. Nothing could be done, or undone, without Stalin's approval.

little people who think of themselves who are happy while people who have great ideas of helping others are always unhappy?"

"There are as many kinds of happiness as there are men," said Volkov wearily. "The only happiness you will ever find, Mark, is in doing something that you feel won't die with you, or at least in serving some cause which you feel is changing the world for the better. If you had been born twenty-five years earlier you too would have found your happiness only in some revolutionary organization as I and those of my generation did. But you were born later, and for you there is still time to correct the results of the crime we permitted. For it was a crime—about that there is no doubt. We thought we could establish the kingdom of freedom on this earth with a crime; but crime can give birth only to crime, nothing more. Our country is filled with people like us who don't know what to do or how to save themselves from the evil that crushes us all, or even what to replace that evil with. That's the terrible thing for me to realize; that I'm an old man and can't change anything. I can only shut the door with a loud noise as I go out. It's terrible for you, too; but you are young, and if you have already learned to hate, you'll go on searching. You have learned to hate, haven't you?"

Mark did not speak; perhaps he found it too terrible to have to admit, even to Volkov, that he hated the Stalin system and Stalin himself.

Volkov did not press for an answer.

him, possibly even better without him. The need is not to kill Stalin, but to destroy the system."

Half an hour before Mark's guests were expected a young and good-looking woman rang the doorbell. Mark opened the door.

"Are you Comrade Surov?" she asked.

"Yes."

"I am your thirteenth guest."

He had expected the First Department to send him some youngster from the Kremlin Guard, who would sit in a corner all evening watching everything that happened and listening to everything that was said. Instead, they had sent this beautiful and expensively dressed woman.

It was to have been a "men only" party, and at first Mark was afraid it would be spoiled by a woman being there. But Helena Sergeevna, as she called herself, was so well-trained, or perhaps so well-suited, to this kind of work, that once the party had started all stiffness and formality disappeared and the guests talked and joked as freely, about everything except politics, as if they had all been men.

About midnight there was a desperate ringing on the bell and a furious knocking at the door. Mark jumped up with astonishment and went to see who it was.

"Why don't you open up and welcome your older brothers!" Kornei roared, and pushing into the hall behind him was Simon. Seizing hold of Mark, Kornei almost lifted him off the floor.

"We come in a hurry; we come in great haste. We felt sure our Mark would be waiting for us. But he wouldn't even open the door."

As Mark embraced Simon he ran his eyes over Kornei.

"How astonishingly well you are, Kornei! A perfect picture!"

Kornei laughed happily. He was a lieutenant-general now—and he loved to be told how handsome he looked in his expensive new uniform with its blue and gold badges, its many shining buttons and the bright decorations across his broad chest.

Simon was quite unlike Kornei. Mark had seen him some months before, and even then he had felt anxiety and pity for his oldest brother. Simon was dressed in an old overcoat and badly-fitting cap, a cheap suit, a shirt without a tie, and heavy ugly boots. However, it was not so

much his clothing that made Mark anxious, as the look of sadness on his face. His mournful eyes suggested some constant worry, some trouble that he could not forget. He was grey and thin; his empty sleeve strengthened the impression that he was fated to come to an unhappy end.

"I'm so glad you've both come. You don't know how happy it has made me," Mark said.

He took them in and introduced them to the guests. Simon hurriedly put out a hand in greeting and then went and sat down in the farthest corner of the room. But Kornei laughed merrily as he was introduced. He was born to be the life and soul of such company, and quickly became the center of attention. He knew all the latest dances, and told his funny stories in such an interesting way that it was almost dawn before the guests began to leave.

Kornei went off to a hotel to sleep, but Simon stayed with Mark. The two of them sat in the darkness, talking of unimportant matters.

"But what of the future, Simon?" Mark suddenly asked.

"I don't know, Mark." Simon answered quietly. "Everything is so confused that you need to have a very fine mind to understand it all. The one clear thing is that the road we took hasn't brought us to where we wanted to go. I've given up Party work because I stopped believing in the Party cause. I saw that the more sacrifices we make for our ideal, the farther we get away from it. You can't remake the world by force. Force breeds force. We have to find other roads; only I no longer have the strength. My generation burned itself out in the revolution; all our strength, our desire and our faith went into it, and when we saw we had taken the wrong road, we had no strength left to find another."

"But my generation?"

"Your generation will put right what we have done. Don't you feel that yourself? Our hopes are in you and in such as you. We're only ashes. That's why Stalin can deal with the Party and the country so easily. It's easy enough to scatter ashes. The only road for us old ones is to the grave, the political grave."

The telephone rang. Mark picked up the receiver. A strange voice informed him:

"Night telegram for you."

"O.K., go ahead," he answered.



"Mark Surov," the operator read clearly. "Dear Mark. I am going away. Good-by. Go on seeking. Yours, Peresvetov."

As he replaced the receiver Mark felt cold. After a moment he picked it up again and asked to be connected with the hospital at which Volkov was staying. The Director himself came to the phone.

"You want Comrade Volkov? Comrade Volkov shot himself two hours ago." He began to say more but Mark was not listening.

Volkov had shot himself! He could hardly believe it. Simon saw Mark's face as he turned away from the telephone. His lips were bitten desperately; his eyes were wide.

"Peresvetov has shot himself!"

Simon's face seemed to change completely. "That's our generation, the generation of the revolution, on its way out," he whispered. Mark's face twisted, and he almost shouted into his brother's face:

"But we're not on our way out! No, by God!"

Tears burned in Mark's eyes, and he went to the open window.

"Look, Simon. Outside that window is Moscow, and beyond Moscow lies all our country, flooded with the blood of our fathers, washed with the tears of our mothers. It's worth living, for her sake, Simon."

Outside, the dawn was breaking.

## Chapter 8

### Surovs in Disgrace

VERA IVANOVNA WAS STAYING with son Ivan, now commander of a military school in Turkestan, when the blow fell. "Mark has disappeared," wrote a friend from Moscow. "His apartment has been locked up."

It appeared that the murder of Stalin's friend Kirov, in Leningrad, had been followed by a wave of arrests, and it was believed that Mark was among those who had been thrown into prison.

Mourning over this new misfortune, but also full of anger and astonishment, the old lady, now nearly eighty years of age, took the next train to the capital.

As she journeyed into the night Mark was slowly walking up and down a small square room with bare brown walls. High up in one wall was a small window covered by heavy iron bars. Through this window he could see a patch of the pale Moscow sky. The room contained a bed, fastened to the wall, a small table fastened to the floor, and a stool.

It was an isolation cell in the Lubianka Prison.

Five steps from the window to the door, five steps from the door to the window. One, two, three, four, five. A left turn, then one, two, three, four, five, again. And as Mark moved backwards and forwards across the cell, his thoughts went backwards and forwards across his mind.

"Is this the end, Mark? Are you afraid of such an end?"

"No, I'm not afraid. Maybe it's better to end this way, with nothing decided."

"What are you now, Mark? Still the same unchanging Communist? Do you still excuse everything?"

"No, I'm no longer a Communist. I don't know who or what I am now, but I'm certainly not a Communist. I don't accept what is happening. I hate what I believed in. All I know is that I want to live, but I've nothing left to live for."

The day after Kirov's death Mark had been one of those called to the office of Yezhov, head of the Personnel Department. His turn came at noon. Throwing himself back in his chair, Yezhov fired the question at him:

"What were your relations with Volkov? You know whom I mean."

"I knew him during the Civil War, when he was known as Peresvetov." And he went on to tell of their first meeting in the hospital and of the political school which Peresvetov had organized.

When Mark had finished Yezhov waited, as if expecting him to say more. As Mark remained silent he raised his head and said:

"You've forgotten to mention that Volkov proved to be an enemy of the people, and shot himself to escape punishment!"

"Why should I mention it?" Mark answered calmly. "It was in all the newspapers. You asked me what my relations with him were, not why he killed himself."

"Maybe . . ." Yezhov said. "The point is not his death but the reason for your failure to mention it. You understand, Surov? Silence always hides something, doesn't it?"

Mark gave no answer.

"Good! You can go!" said Yezhov.

Ten minutes later Mark was informed that his services were no longer required at the Kremlin; he had been dismissed. That night he was ready and waiting. At four o'clock in the morning there was a knock on his door. Three men were there to take him to Lubianka. In the prison, in the very center of Moscow, he was pushed into the cell, and the heavy iron door closed behind him.

As soon as Vera Ivanovna arrived in Moscow she began to search for her son. She visited many government offices and organizations; she stood all day outside the office of the Public Prosecutor; she waited at the gate of the Kremlin; she spent hours standing in lines. But she could not discover where Mark had been taken. Always she received the same answer: "We have no information about Mark Surov." Her anxiety grew from hour to hour, and more and more frequently the whisper came from her lips: "Please God, may I not be too late. May Kornei arrive soon!" Kornei was in fact on his way, but it was a seven-day journey from his Army Headquarters to Moscow. From Simon she had received a telegram: "Taking all steps. Look after yourself."

One day, thanks to the help of an old friend of Kornei's whom she met by chance, she was able to get to see a fairly high official of the N. K. V. D.

"What can I do for you?" he asked, when at last she sat before him.

"I'm looking for my son, Mark Surov."

"Well, he's here, I can tell you that; but it's useless trying to do anything for him. If he hasn't been shot yet it's only because he's one of the Surov family. . . ." Rising from his seat, the man added, "You brought many children into the world, citizeness; but your youngest one hasn't been a success. Don't beg for his life and don't come here again; he'll never leave this place alive."

"What do you mean?" She got the words out only with difficulty.

"I mean that such as he have no right to live."

Slowly, supporting herself on a stick, Vera Ivanovna rose to her feet. Her white face was twisted with anger, her old, faded eyes suddenly flaming. Straightening her bowed back she raised her stick and brought it down with all her little strength on the head of the official. Furiously he caught hold of her thin little body and threw her to the floor. She got up from the carpet, groaning with pain. People ran into the room.

"Take her away," he shouted. "Put her in a cell." Without saying another word Vera Ivanovna, carrying her head high, allowed herself to be led off to prison.

It was not without good reason that the N. K. V. D. assistant spoke so harshly and so confidently to the mother of a Surov. Or rather it was not without a reason that he thought was good. It was generally believed that Yagoda, then head of the N. K. V. D., was about to be dismissed by Stalin, and that his place would be taken by Yezhov. So Yezhov was the one the assistant must try to please, and if Yezhov had had Mark Surov arrested he would obviously be pleased by any harshness shown to the mother. Unfortunately for the assistant it didn't work out that way, and he was to pay dearly for his mistake.

Three days after Vera Ivanovna was put into prison Kornei Surov was shown into the private office of Voroshilov. Though he had been in Moscow only a few hours he had already managed to find out what had happened to his mother. He had not been allowed to see either her or Mark, and had not been able to do anything about freeing them. Now he had come to Voroshilov himself to ask him to take the Surovs, mother and son, under his protection.

"It's ridiculous," said Voroshilov to Kornei, as he put down the telephone after speaking to Yezhov. "So many things are going on these days, you don't know whether to laugh or to cry. But don't worry, Kornei. We won't let your mother be treated like that. . . . And the son of the regiment will be freed, too."

Three weeks after his arrest Mark was taken from his cell and told that orders had been received for him to be released. He was informed, however, that for the time being he would have to leave Moscow. As he was making

to go, he was told: "By the way, your mother is to be released too. The order has already been given."

Mark jumped as though someone had struck him. His mother was in prison too! That was beyond all belief, all bearing! He turned back to the man who had spoken to him. "My mother deserves something better than prison," was all he could find to say.

"Probably!" the man agreed. "But I had nothing to do with it. She struck a high N. K. V. D. official with a stick, so they put her in prison."

Not since the day when, as a boy, Mark had heard his mother being savagely beaten by a White officer had he felt such pain or been so angered. That senseless cruelty at the hands of a White officer had been one of the things that made him a Communist. But now it was the Communists who had struck at him through his mother. That was something he would never forget.

"Not so fast," the guard ordered as Mark began to run to the room where his mother was waiting for him. Mark tried to slow down, but the feeling storming within him drove him on. Then his mother was before him. As she threw herself into his arms the white hair broke out from under the headcovering and fell round her face; her aged cheeks were flooded with tears.

"Mark, my little son!" she murmured as she stroked his cheeks, his hair, his shoulders.

"Forgive us, Mamma," he muttered. "We're the cause of it all. Forgive us for the useless deaths of Father and my brothers . . . for having built prisons and given power to such men. . . . Forgive us for all that has been and will be. . . ."

"Hush!" she whispered. "We're all guilty! You've turned away from God and everything has grown empty. I don't understand, but I see you are carrying a load of sorrow. But now be quiet, my dear. We'll go away from here. Mark. From this Moscow. There's too much sorrow for people in this place. We'll go away, won't we, Mark?"

"Yes, Mother; we'll go away. We'll go back home to the village, back to the steppe. . . ."

Back in the village Mark went about for weeks with the weight of a great loss on him. It was as if he was in mourning for the faith that had died within him . . . for the love that had turned to hate. . . . He could neither eat nor sleep. For hours he would sit, or stand at a win-

dow, lost in his thoughts. When people passed him he did not see them; when they spoke he did not hear them. Not even his mother's anxious tears could draw him away from his sorrow.

Gradually the wounds began to heal. Or rather Mark began to see that his own misery was only a very small part of the much greater misery of his people. For even in bad times the village people had never been as badly off as now. Life may have been hard, but they had known that they must gain their bread by their own work; the harder they worked the better things would be at home. With the coming of the collective farms all this had been changed. The land and the cattle had been taken from them; the sheep had disappeared from the steppes. The harvest that year had not been bad, but the farmers got little benefit from it. When they had gathered the harvest they had to hand most of it over to the State; and when the time came to share out what was left they received only a few ounces in payment for each working day.

There were three collective farms in the village, and one had been named after Timothy Surov. Mark could not bear the sight of that collective-farm poverty, which seemed to shame his father's memory. Nor could he look without disgust at the scenes around the gun factory which was being built nearby. Groups of prisoners—thin, dressed in rags, hardly able to drag their feet—were always being marched through the streets. The horses of the collective farm were too thin and weak to pull the cartloads of building materials, and often the prisoners had to help them by pushing and pulling.

Finally, the long-awaited word came from Moscow. Mark's "punishment" was to be five years of "minus six"; in other words he was forbidden to live in any of the six largest cities of the Soviet Union for five years. No reason was given for the sentence, and Mark did not care much. He had long since decided that he would remain in the village where his father had lived. "You've always wanted me to be a village teacher, Mother," he said to her one day, "and now I will be one."

Two weeks later he entered the building which housed the small school of the Timothy Surov collective farm. Hanging on the wall of the schoolroom was a picture of his father, drawn by the village artist and fitted into a big wooden frame. Under those kindly eyes he would teach these boys and girls how beautiful life could be if man







"Thirty thousand!"

Apanasenko jumped up, his square-cut face redder than ever. "That fool Yezhov is destroying the whole army," he cried. "What will be the end of it, Voroshilov?"

"Do you think I know?" Voroshilov exclaimed. "That's just the trouble. I'm not told anything. We ourselves may be in danger, and any attempt to interfere might increase the danger. Do you want to lose your own position, perhaps even your head?"

That was the last thing Apanasenko wanted. He was now a full general in the army, and had much to lose. At the same time he could not leave Kornei to his fate; there were too many threads binding them together.

"Well, you can do as you like," he said, "but we can't leave him in their hands. We went side by side into battle; we shared our joys and sorrows. We've got to help him; we've simply got to."

"I know we've got to," Voroshilov answered, and closing his eyes he recalled how during the Civil War, just outside Tsaritsyn, Kornei had led his regiment out to rescue a military train from the hands of the Whites. Voroshilov himself had been on that train. Afterwards Kornei had ridden up, and with one leg streaming with blood from a wound he had slowed his excited horse and laughingly introduced himself.

"Come along!" Voroshilov jumped up from his chair. "The master may order us to be shot, but come on all the same."

As they passed Mark in the outer office Apanasenko whispered to him: "Come to my place this evening; I may have news for you."

That night Apanasenko narrated what had happened at the meeting with Stalin.

"At first he wouldn't even listen to us. He simply answered, 'Yezhov will get to the bottom of it.' So then I threw in my last card. I reminded Stalin how in 1920 Kornei, in trying to carry out his instructions, had quarreled violently with Tukhachevski and after that the two hated each other like poison. Finally he laughed and said, 'Surov's got to be helped.' Those were his exact words: 'Surov's got to be helped.' Then he turned us out, but I could tell he would do what's necessary. Voroshilov is quite certain of it too."

That same evening Stalin asked Yezhov to report to him on the case of Kornei Surov.

"He wouldn't admit his guilt," said Yezhov. "He was raging mad. When arrested he wounded my officer and even now, when he's in prison, he swears he'll tear the heads off all the police and throw them to the dogs to eat."

Stalin laughed. He knew those Budenny men with their fiery tempers. If Kornei was threatening that sort of thing he couldn't have any feelings of guilt.

"I think he can be released," Stalin finally announced. "And you are to do everything possible to put him in a good humor again. Understand?"

A year after his release from jail Kornei Surov was sent to the Far East again in the footsteps of Apanasenko, who had taken over Blucher's position. From there he wrote his brother Mark a happy letter. "I've been appointed commander of an army," he wrote. "If only you knew what fine fellows all the officers are!"

Meanwhile the idea that Stalin's Communism and Hitler's National Socialism could not live side by side had been exploded—for the time being. The two dictators signed an agreement promising to help each other in every way possible. Hitler's armies, fed with Russian grain, advanced in the west. German tanks burning Soviet fuel rolled through to Paris, and an endless stream of trains loaded with grain, oil, and iron ore rolled from Russia to Germany. In the last days of the spring of 1941 a note was published in the Russian newspapers:

"Rumors are being spread that there has been a worsening of relations between the Soviet Union and Germany. These rumors are not in accordance with the facts. Our relations with Germany are developing normally."

After this official denial of possible trouble people in Russia felt certain that peace between the two countries could not and would not long continue.

## The Men of the Woods

EARLY ONE MORNING IN June, 1941, Hitler's tanks and soldiers rushed, amid smoke and thunder, onto Russian soil. Overhead flew his squadrons. Within the hour Soviet tanks and planes caught on the ground were going up in flames. The Soviet armies in the west were being wiped out by a deadly fire from heaven and earth, and before long what was left of them would be fleeing to the east.

The German-Soviet war had begun.

In the south of Russia a cavalry corps, to be commanded by General Krymov, was being assembled in a forest encampment. It was a strange sort of corps, not made up of divisions and regiments and equipped with heavy artillery, but consisting of cavalry only, armed with small cannon and machine-guns mounted on heavy wagons. The corps was to consist of sixteen "task forces," each of two hundred horsemen.

Mark had been called up for military duty on the first day of the war, and was now ordered to report, as commander of the Thirteenth Force, to General Krymov.

He left his village with a heavy heart. A month back his mother had gone to stay with Ivan, who had been sent to the western frontier. The Germans had occupied the town where he was stationed one hour after the beginning of the war. What had happened to Mother? What had happened to Ivan and his wife and children? Mark feared the worst.

On the other hand the pain, the doubts, the anxiety, the search for the truth he had lost—all these now fell away. The enemy had set foot on Russian soil, and that was all that mattered now. The Germans must be driven off. There was no further need for discussion, for argument. To the depths of his being he felt that the enemy must be driven out.

The sixteen trains carrying Krymov's Corps to the west moved rapidly enough at the start. Moscow had given orders that the railroad should be cleared for them to go through. The cars were packed with men, horses

and small cannon. The horses were tied to the walls, four to each side, and separated by heavy wooden rails. Very little room was left in the center for the men.

As they approached the areas in which German bombs had done the greatest damage to tracks and stations, progress became slower and slower, until finally the trains came to a stop. On the way one whole force—the sixth—had been wiped out by a concentrated air attack.

During the last part of the journey, while they were traveling west, the German invasion forces had passed them, going in the opposite direction. There was no military front in the military sense of the word, as in 1914, and nobody could have found it on a map. There was just general confusion, through which the German columns forced their way to occupy town after town.

When they could go no further by train Mark drew up his small force under the trees at the edge of a forest. His orderly led up the horse he had chosen for himself—a high-standing, big-boned animal called Savage because of his violent temper. Mark rode along the lines of his men, studying their faces. The tasks of the Corps had been kept secret from everyone but the commanders. Not only were they expected to make their way far behind the enemy lines, but each force was to act independently, having no contact with the others. If one found itself in difficulties, surrounded by the enemy, there would be no hope of help or rescue. That was the plan, and even Krymov thought he would be lucky if more than half the Corps managed to reach the area in which he was supposed to operate.

Mark knew that he ought to say something to the men before they all set off, but he wasn't sure what to say. "Friends!" he began. But even as he said the word he caught himself wondering whether they would understand. Would they trust him? Or would they simply regard him as an enemy who was dragging them off to their death? He started again, this time in a less confident tone:

"Friends . . . Brothers! I'm not going to tell you that we're going to fight for Stalin and the Party and all that sort of thing. That's what they're writing in the newspapers. But our aim is clearer and simpler than that. We're going to fight for our country, for our people. If we don't hold on to our country we'll be ashamed to look our children in the eyes; they'll become a people without a land of their own."

"But the German isn't our only enemy; the enemy is nesting in Russia itself and won't let the people live," somebody shouted from the back.

"I know," Mark replied. "We've grown many weeds on our native soil; but after all it is our own soil, my friends, and we can always pull up the weeds. The war itself will burn down many of them, and those that are left we'll pull up ourselves afterwards. Isn't that so, comrades?"

There was a silence in the ranks. No response! His heart sank. But then a single hoarse voice called out from the left. Mark knew it to be the voice of Sergeant Demin, a great, fair-haired giant of a man who could hardly get into the largest-size military uniform.

"You're right; there's no denying it. We'll clear the Germans out first and then we'll deal with our own troubles in the same way."

A quiet laugh ran through the ranks. The men had not misunderstood what their commander had told them. On his order the force re-formed into platoons. The forest threw its arms wide open; silently it swallowed up Major Mark Surov's Thirteenth Task Force.

Before the outbreak of the war all the finest of the Soviet armies, those equipped with the most powerful weapons, were kept on the western frontier. Large forces were stationed in the villages and towns; in fact there were more soldiers than civilians in that part of the country. All this created a feeling of confidence that Russia had a reliable defense on that side.

But all this broke down overnight. The Soviet corps and divisions became columns of prisoners marching along the roads to the west, guarded by German soldiers. And the military supply bases, the military stores and gasoline tanks, the trains of military supplies—all these fell into German hands with hardly a struggle.

The German rear—crowded with supply bases and landing fields moving forward from point to point behind the army—seemed to be quiet and safe. The Russian towns and villages which had been captured gave no trouble; the people carried out the orders of the German military command without protest; the conquerors, dressed in green uniforms, walked self-confidently on Russian soil.

But gradually stories began to spread of strange men who appeared from time to time in the rear of the Ger-



soon stamped down by the coming and going of many human feet and horses' hooves, and it was as populated as a village street. The slopes were blackened by the smoke arising from many holes in which the men lived. Beside each hole was a shelter covered with green branches, in which the horses were kept. All around the camp Mark had placed guards to give advance warning of anyone approaching.

From this hide-away Mark led out almost every night about a third of his men on one attack or another, leaving the others resting. Instructions as to who or what he was to attack came by radio from Krymov's headquarters; reports of the outcome of the nightly work were sent back in the same way.

One night the men at one of the outposts captured three civilians approaching the camp and brought them in as prisoners. It turned out that they were not spies, as the guards had thought, but a Party political commissar and two assistants who had been assigned to duty with Mark's force. There had been no attack that night, and Mark was awakened to receive the three men. Having made arrangements for them to sleep in the camp he went back to his bed, forgetting that the commissar had on arrival handed him a personal letter.

But he didn't find it easy to go to sleep again. He had a pretty good idea why the commissar and his assistants had been sent. All through the countryside it was now becoming clear that the Russian people had no desire to fight. It was as if they had suddenly lost all their strength and were running helplessly before the advancing enemy. There was no longer a Russian nation now, only terrified people who did not know what to do, which way to turn.

Recently, on Krymov's orders, Mark had gathered together some fifteen hundred soldiers who had been scattered by the swiftness of the German advance. As soon as he told them they would be sent up to the front line to rejoin the Soviet army they began to leave again. Within a week almost all of them had disappeared; less than one hundred were left.

He remembered too the incident of the two thousand five hundred prisoners he had freed from their German guards. They were being marched to a prisoner-of-war camp. Instead of being happy about their escape they had eyed Mark and his men distrustfully, and had begun

to run away at every opportunity. They had no desire to fight any more. They would rather have been prisoners than fighting soldiers.

Was all this happening only in his own area, or had something begun all over Russia that made it hopeless to think of carrying on the war? He had no idea. But it seemed to him that now everything depended on the Germans and on the way they behaved. If they treated the Russians well there would be even less desire among them to fight; if on the other hand they treated them badly resistance would harden. At present it wasn't clear which way they would act.

Gradually he grew more sleepy. His thoughts turned to his mother. Where was she now? What was happening to her? Was she still alive, or dead like so many others? Suddenly he remembered the letter. Lighting a lamp he tore open the envelope and drew out a thin sheet of paper on which were only a few lines of writing:

Mark:

Perhaps I have no right, now, to answer that letter you wrote to me so many years ago. At that time—and until now—I felt I could not respond to you. I loved Peter, and as long as he lived I felt that for his sake and for his son's I must be true to him. Now Peter is dead. He died on that island. I heard just a few days ago.

Mark, do you ever remember me? I have thought of you all these years, but now I don't even know where you are or if you are still alive. I remembered that Kornei Surov was your brother, and I'm sending this letter through him.

My dear, if this ever reaches you I ask you to live for my sake. And if you wish, I ask if you are ever near the town of Borovichi to come to me. I shall be waiting.

Mark

At last! At last! It had come . . . a letter from Mark! Mark felt a wild excitement. He had never forgotten her, never stopped hoping. And now she had written. Mark smiled. Then he smiled more broadly, at the corners of his eyes. Now he would live, he knew it. And some day he would go to her.



One day the men of the Thirteenth Force were disturbed to find that their commander had disappeared. At last, in reply to their repeated questionings, they were told by the staff captain that he had gone on a particularly important job radioed by the Corps Commander.

"Alone?" they asked in amazement.

"No, there are two of them—no more were needed for this job."

The men began to look round to see who else was missing, beside the Major. The only one was a man named Pavlukhin, formerly secretary of a village Communist group. When the Germans swept over the country he had turned up, to join the Thirteenth Force. It was obvious that he was the one who had gone off with the Major, probably because he knew the countryside so well. The men discussed this mysterious job for some days, then gave it up.

Meanwhile Mark, with the former Communist secretary as his companion and guide, had made his way eastward through some of the loneliest and most difficult parts of the forest. He was wearing a railway worker's dirty old coat and strong patched boots. They had left the force six days before; now they were coming to the end of their journey. Somewhere not far away, in the heart of the marshes, was a spot known as the "Snakes' Bound"; it was here that, according to Krymov's instructions, he would find the small group of men he had been ordered to seek out. When he found them he was to take them, if possible, to the Russian side of the front; if that was impossible they were to join his force. The instructions ended: "The greatest care must be taken. These men must not be allowed to die, especially the oldest of them."

What was called the "Snakes' Bound" turned out to be a small piece of solid ground, covered with trees, which rose above the surrounding marshes. As Mark and his guide approached the edge of the trees they were met by a tall man with a yellow, sickly-looking face, who stepped out from behind the bushes.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Major Surov, commander of a task force. I have been instructed by General Krymov to find certain men believed to be in this area."

The tall man stared at him. "Kornei Surov's brother?" he asked. Mark nodded. "Good, Major Surov. You've

found the right place. The marshal is under that tree." He pointed behind him.

Marshal! Mark thought. Which of the marshals could be here? Budenny? Impossible! According to the radio he was in southern Russia, where he appeared to be losing battle after battle. Timoshenko? Voroshilov? The broad-shouldered grey-headed old man stepped out from behind the tree. Mark recognized him at once: Marshal Kulik.

While Mark was making his report they were joined by three other men. These five—a marshal, three generals and a colonel—were all that remained of the headquarters staff of the Soviet armies that had been swept away on the western frontier during the first days of the war. After a long journey eastwards, exhausted by the long march and lack of food, they had been forced to take refuge on the "Snakes' Bound."

Now the Marshal had to decide whether Mark should lead them to the Soviet side of the front, some distance to the east, or to his own camp, about the same distance to the west. Of the two journeys that to the east, through the German lines, would be much the more dangerous. Late in the afternoon he decided: "Major Surov will conduct me to the Russian lines; the others will go with Pavlukhin to the camp."

Shylov, one of the three generals, was so sick that he was hardly able to walk. Mark was glad that he was to go to the camp and not to the east, because he knew that Shylov was one of a number of generals who, according to an order given by Stalin, were to be shot on sight, as being responsible for the disasters that had overtaken the Russian armies. Shylov himself had an idea that this might be so, and when he asked Mark if he had heard anything about it Mark did not deny it.

"I knew Stalin would do something like that," Shylov remarked.

Next morning, after a few hours' sleep, the group broke up. The marshal and Mark were the first to leave, turning their faces eastwards. The others stood looking after them till they were lost to sight; then they too, led by Pavlukhin, left the little island of solid ground and went off in the other direction.

Mark was still in his railwayman's clothes, and the marshal too had thrown away his uniform and put on a ragged jacket and an old cap such as the old men of

every Russian village wear. Somehow the German commanders if the area had found out that he was hiding in their rear and they were competing in a hunt for him. When Mark heard this he decided to keep entirely to the forest route, going alone to the villages and little towns to obtain food and leaving Kulik always in hiding. The nights, which they spent in lonely forest huts or in the bushes, were bitterly cold.

At last, after some narrow escapes, they reached the area immediately behind the German front. The front was still not clearly defined; sometimes it was as much as twenty-five to thirty miles in depth. Several times Mark had to use his pistol. Once, when they halted to rest in a quiet spot, Kulik remarked, "You've taken many sins on your soul, Major, and possibly all for nothing."

Mark shook his head. "It doesn't matter now," he said. "If we're caught we'll be shot immediately anyhow . . . but they won't catch us. . . ." Kulik had no doubt the Germans would catch them.

Slowly making their way across country they came to a small town near the active fighting. Like many other towns this one too was empty of troops; neither German nor Soviet forces were in possession of it. After a long search Mark found a place where he thought he could leave the marshal in safety. It was an underground room in the town Power House, which had been put out of operation by a bomb and was now deserted. It contained everything they needed—a lamp, a heap of straw and a pail for water. Mark hunted around for some food.

Kulik had guessed Mark's plan; he proposed to try to get across to the Soviet side alone and then come back with a rescue party. Just as he was about to start on that desperate journey Kulik called him back. The small lamp threw its light on the marshal's uncombed beard, leaving the rest of his face in shadow. "If you meet your brother give him my greetings," he said. Mark waited; he knew that was not all the marshal had called him back for. "My family is in Moscow, if anything happens tell them the government will care for them. . . . And one other thing; I owe you a great debt of gratitude, Major. You've had a lot of trouble because of me, and now you're going off to almost certain death."

"That's all right, Comrade Marshal; that's my job as a soldier. I'll try to avoid getting killed, but if anything does happen don't blame me. If you don't hear from me

within two or three days try to make your own way across, or back to the rear."

The marshal gripped Mark's hand tightly.

A young Russian soldier had been sent out into the no man's land in front of the position occupied by his regiment. Hiding in a little hollow place he was keeping watch for any sign of enemy movement during the night. It was some time after midnight when he heard shots and shouts coming from the direction of the German lines. He held his breath. He should have fired a warning shot, but he was so frightened that he could only pray to God to keep him from harm. Now the sound of the shooting grew nearer, and he saw someone running through the bushes straight toward him. Jumping from his hole he ran in terror back to the camp, followed by the other man. "Help," he kept shouting, thinking that the Germans were behind him.

Hearing his shouts his comrades in the *trenches* started to fire, and the bullets whistling round his ears made him even more panic-stricken. Running as fast as his legs would carry him he at last fell into the trench. When, a few seconds later, his pursuer also dropped into the trench, he lay there for a long time, unable to get his breath.

"Who the hell are you?" asked the young lieutenant. When Mark was at last able to speak he told him and asked to be taken to divisional headquarters. There he asked for permission to make telephone contact with the staff of the Supreme Command in Moscow. Learning that he was commander of a task force in Krymov's Corps the general agreed.

After much delay, and just as Mark was falling asleep, he was handed the telephone receiver:

"Wait! You'll be connected in a minute."

Seconds passed and then a voice, very distant and faint, reached his ears: "Who's speaking?"

"Major Surov, Commander of the Thirteenth Force of Krymov's Corps. Please report that I'm here in connection with a special order to General Krymov with regard to a certain man. . . ."

"What man?"

"The Supreme Command knows."

Then another long silence, and another voice asking "Who's speaking?" He repeated his story.

"Wait!" Suddenly yet another voice came over the wire. This one seemed astonishingly familiar. It had a foreign tone, and the words were interrupted by heavy breathing, like that of someone suffering from a chest illness.

"What have you to report?" the voice asked.

Now Mark knew he was speaking to Stalin himself. Briefly, he reported that he had brought Marshal Kulik right up to the front, but had not risked bringing him across.

"You have done right," Stalin said. "But have you got him safely hidden?"

"I can't be completely sure. I've hidden him to the best of my ability."

Another silence. Then the voice said, in a different tone:

"Krymov did not understand my order properly. I said we cannot allow a Marshal of the Soviet Union to fall into German hands alive. You understand—alive! You and Krymov have created a situation in which that has become a very real danger. What do you propose to do now?"

"I think, Comrade Stalin, that with quite a small force we could attack the town where I have left the marshal and rescue him."

Stalin was silent; evidently he was thinking it over.

"That's complicated," he said. "A safer way would be to send a small group to . . . to get Kulik. Could you lead such a group?"

Mark sat stiffly. He fully understood the meaning and importance of what Stalin had just said. Stalin would take no chance of Kulik's falling alive into German hands. He would rather have Mark lead a group with orders to kill Kulik, and then Mark himself would probably be killed too, in order to cover up the secret of the marshal's death. Drops of sweat stood out on his forehead.

"No," he said, "it would be impossible for such a group to get through. It wouldn't have a chance in a hundred."

Through the earpiece he again heard the irregular breathing, like that of a man who is making an important decision. He knew exactly what Stalin was thinking. If the group were to perish Kulik would almost certainly fall into German hands. It was a chance that could not be taken.

"How large a force would be needed to break through?" Stalin asked.

"Not a very large one—say a regiment and a few tanks."

"Good! I'll give orders for a regiment to be assigned. You will take charge of the operation. But bear in mind what I have said: Kulik is not to be surrendered alive. If he is, you will answer for it with your head. Understand?"

"I understand."

Mark heard the receiver being put down. He waited a moment or two longer, but the line remained silent.

Mark's plan was carried through. The Soviet regiment easily broke through the thin German lines. The weak enemy outer guards were withdrawn without a fight. The German guns fired a few shells and retreated. The way was thus opened for a tank to rush through the streets. It halted outside the Power Station. Mark brought Kulik out of the underground room and helped him to squeeze into the narrow seat of the tank. Then the tank went off to the Russian lines, with nothing in the way that was likely to hinder it. Mark's job had been accomplished.

## Chapter 10

### Between Life and Death

AS MARK MADE THE long journey back to his camp he wondered again and again what he would find on his arrival there. He had an unhappy feeling that all was not well, a feeling that grew stronger when he found that more and more German troops seemed to be moving in the same direction as he was.

"They're concentrating a terrific power in that direction," one old railwayman told him. "They say they've discovered a Russian task force there, and they're going all out to destroy it."

That night Mark slipped like a shadow past the German lines; then, after going a little further, he gave a

birdcall. Leaning against a tree he waited. In the distance he heard the answering call. So the force still existed. He kept on calling. Each time he heard the answering call he slowly moved forward. But now he could tell it was coming not from the river bed but from the marshes. Then he knew that the worst had happened. The force had its back to marsh lands that were impassable, and there was no way of retreat.

"There's no hope," said his captain as they gripped hands in the darkness. "We've got only two shells to each gun and very few bullets left. Only seventy-three of the men are fit to fight; the rest are killed or wounded. Not more than twenty horses, and they're in even worse condition than the men."

"We must find a way out," Mark declared.

"There is no way out," was the calm reply.

Mark knew that well enough, but he felt a powerful desire to save himself and his men somehow. His mind worked swiftly. Perhaps if a small group were to strike at the German positions on one side, enough of their forces could be drawn off from the other side to make it possible for the rest of the force to break through there. The attackers would no doubt perish, but that was better than that the whole force should be wiped out.

Hurriedly he changed into military dress. Then he stepped out in front of his men.

"Comrades," he said, "I'm calling for a small number of volunteers to do a dangerous job with me, in order that the others may be saved. Those of you who are ready to follow me step to my side."

Eleven men, one of them General Shylov, stepped forward.

What happened to the rest of his force Mark never knew. Of his own small group only he himself and one other, a young soldier named Korovin, remained alive to fall prisoner into German hands. Mark was badly wounded in the leg; Korovin was unhurt.

"Anyway I'm one up on Stalin," Shylov had said to Mark with his dying breath.

"But I wasn't condemned, so I won't be one up on Stalin when I die," thought Mark as he was carried through the forest by Korovin and another Russian prisoner. He knew that nothing but death awaited him, for had not Hitler declared all members of the task forces

to be outside the international law governing treatment of war prisoners? The thought of death no longer troubled him; it simply meant that everything would be settled. His torturing doubts would be left behind. The sense of disaster he had felt for so long would fall away, and there would be nothing left. Only a great emptiness.

But he would be leaving much that was near and dear to him. Even this dark, low autumnal sky, unfriendly though it was, was dear to him because it was his own. His brothers—Kornei, Ivan and Simon; his mother—the very thought of her quickened the feeling of pity and pain within him. And Maria, too, would be left in that land to which for him there would be no return. On his way back to the force he had passed through Borovichi, hoping to see her and tell her how he felt. He had seen her son Peter, but she was not there; she had volunteered as a nurse in the first days of the war.

Lena, Katya, Maria—each of them had taken her own road through his life, had brought her own kind of love. And out of the separate and different loves of these three women something had been born in him that he called love but which could not be defined. . . .

Idly he wondered how much longer he had to live. Maybe an hour or two? Come to think of it, it was rather strange that the German colonel of the force that captured him had not had him shot on the spot, but had ordered that he should be sent to the prisoner-of-war camp which, after three days on the road, they were now approaching. Was it possible that he had no knowledge of Hitler's order?

When they reached the camp Mark looked about him with curiosity. There were no buildings, no kitchens, nothing to suggest that human beings were supposed to be living there. Perhaps the starving, half-savage men who were wandering hopelessly about were not regarded as human? The Soviet armies were still falling to pieces, powerless to prevent the enemy advance, and hundreds of thousands of men were pouring into these German camps.

At the moment that he was being carried through the gates of the camp his attention was drawn by the sound of airplanes. Looking up he saw one group after an-



other flying from the east. They were Soviet planes. Suddenly a fearful cry rose from thousands of throats:

"Bombs!"

What looked like a number of black dots had broken away from the machines. Then destruction hit the camp. Whipped onto the ground by the hot violent blast Mark fell some yards away, amid a mass of arms and legs and shrieking bloody bodies. Amid the groans of the dying Mark shook his raised fists at the sky and screamed up at the planes. "Fools! Why are you killing your own people?" And through his tears, with eyes delirious with fury, he saw only that one face, the face with the low brow and smoke-stained whiskers, the face of evil—Stalin. Then he again raised his eyes and to the skies he shouted: "Why are you silent?"

But the gods had nothing to say.

People living near the westward roads in those days became used to seeing the endless lines of Russian prisoners. These slow-moving ribbons of grey human bodies and grey human faces stretched for miles. Slowly they crawled through forests and fields, past towns and villages. And as they crawled they left dark patches behind in their tracks. The prisoners who were too exhausted to go any further were shot where they dropped. The further west these lines advanced the more frequently were blood-stained patches left behind on the road.

Some days after the "massacre of brothers," Mark took his place in one of these lines of prisoners. The Soviet bombs which had destroyed so many Russian lives had in fact saved his. For they had also killed the German guards who had brought him to the camp and they had wiped out the offices of the German camp administration, together with all record of his activities in the task force. Now the Germans knew him only as an officer prisoner-of-war, and he was included in a group of prisoners who were to be moved further west. The wounded prisoners such as he were carried in carts that dragged along behind the marching men.

Thus Mark found himself, at the beginning of the winter of 1941, in a prisoner-of-war camp at a small Russian fortress town not far from the western frontier. In the camp were many thousands of Russian soldiers, but he was one of a small group of officers who lived in what

had formerly been a storeroom, which fortunately had shelves wide enough to serve as beds.

One morning Mark lay on his shelf, his hands beneath his head. A small board with his cap on it served as pillow. Though his leg wound was still not fully healed he had left the hospital because he had found it too painful to remain there continually surrounded by dying men. If his leg had been completely well he would have tried to escape, but he still had to use a stick.

Though his leg would have made any immediate attempt at escape foolish, if not impossible, he was always thinking out possible methods, either for others or for himself, later, when the wound was healed.

In the camp there was one young Russian lieutenant to whom he took a great liking. His name was Kotov. Kotov had often said that he would rather be killed trying to escape than be slowly starved to death by the Germans, and he had a group of friends who felt the same way.

When Mark saw that sooner or later Kotov would try to escape with or without his help he told him of one idea he had had, which he thought was the best. He said that to get through the masses of barbed wire, under the eyes of the German guards, was impossible. Many had tried it, and their bodies had been left lying where they had been shot down, as a warning to others. But there was one way out that nobody had tried. It wasn't easy and it would be far from pleasant. It was through the area which lay between the *latrines* used by the prisoners on the one side and those used by the German guards on the other.

At the thought of it even Kotov, tough though he was, went pale with horror. But after discussing the plan with his friends all day they decided to try that very same night. Mark watched them, unobserved, as they slipped out of their barracks, one by one, and crawled across the open ground to the latrines. He waited, expecting any minute to hear the sound of guns from the other side of the wire. But when half-an-hour had passed and the silence remained unbroken he breathed a sigh of relief. It looked as though Kotov and his friends had escaped. Little did Mark dream, as he returned to his bed in the storeroom, that he too would soon be leaving the camp, though not by the same route and not of his own free will.

It happened after he had been stricken down with typhus. This is a highly infectious disease and there was a strict order that all cases should be reported to the prison authorities. As soon as a case was reported the sick man was taken away by truck to the "hospital." This was in fact nothing but a clearing in forest a few miles from the camp. There the sick were thrown out of the truck onto the snow and left to die.

Knowing this, Mark's fellow-officers tried for as long as they could to hide the fact that he had fallen a victim to the disease. But one day it was discovered, and as he lay unconscious, in the grip of the fever, they prepared him as best they could for what all knew must be his last journey. Around his body they wrapped the warmest coat they could find, and drew the belt tight. Over his head they put a thick woolen cloth. No boot was large enough to go over his heavily bandaged foot, but they found rubber ones that could be made to fit. During the weeks he had been with them in the camp Mark had become very popular, and it was with heavy hearts and tears in their eyes that they watched him being carried out to the truck.

It was the heavy bump, as he was dropped onto the snow-covered ground in the forest clearing, that brought Mark back to a kind of semi-consciousness. Slowly he opened his eyes. At first, when it seemed to his fevered eyes as though the trees and sky were dancing around and around him, he thought he was dreaming. In his dream he thought he saw also, dancing around with the trees and the sky, a great brown patch that came and went . . . came and went . . .

Summoning up all his strength to escape from the dream he compelled the dancing shapes to stop their movement. And then, suddenly, he recalled from the early days of his illness the talk about the "hospital" and he half-guessed where he was. One look at the bodies lying near him, and he was certain.

So this was to be his end. What a way to die! But perhaps after all it was not too bad. Soon the cold and weariness would overcome him, his eyes would close again, and he would slip into a deep sleep from which he would never wake up.

But now the brown patch came back, and, his vision cleared by the shock of realizing where he was, he saw it to be a bear, a forest bear, so thin that the rough-haired

skin hung loosely on its enormous bones. For a moment they remained perfectly still, the man and the bear, staring at each other. Then Mark's sense of danger, his instinct to fight, to save himself from death, took possession of him and forced him to his feet. With eyes enlarged by his fear he took a threatening step towards the animal; it turned, and with dragging feet half-walked, half-ran away.

Still driven by his fear Mark started walking, and once he had started he found he could go on. Following the tracks made by the truck-wheels he reached the road. Then he stopped and looked back. The bear, which had been following him, had also stopped.

Desperately Mark looked up and down the road. Westward, to the right, lay the camp. Eastward, to the left, was the little town of Borovichi, and in it a little house—Maria's house. Perhaps the one spot in all the world that he might be able to force himself to reach. Again it was instinct rather than conscious thought that made the decision for him. He turned to the left and began to walk again. Death was on his heels—his own death, waiting for him to fall. Yet he did not fall. It was so simple, really; whenever it seemed that he could go no further he struck the ground hard with his injured leg, and then the pain, shooting like hot needles up the nerves, gave him the needed impulse to continue.

God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. When Kotov told Mark of his decision to attempt the escape Mark gave him Maria's name and address in Borovichi. Kotov got there late one night, starving and almost frozen to death. She it was who had sheltered and fed and clothed him while he was recovering from the effects of his terrible ordeal.

As soon as he was able to move about she had hired a sleigh and together they went to the camp. Maria had a few gold coins, borrowed from her mother, and with these she hoped to be able to get Mark and Korovin out by paying the guards. It was easy enough to secure Korovin's release in this way, for as he was only one of thousands of soldiers who were never counted the guard knew that he would never be missed. As an officer, however, Mark was listed, and no guard would have risked helping him to escape. Korovin's news, however, made that unnecessary. He had known of Mark's illness, and that very

morning he had stood by, helpless, while his beloved Major was being carried out, more dead than alive, to the waiting truck.

Now, free at last, Korovin was sitting at the back of the sleigh with Maria, while Kotov, standing before them, was driving the two big horses, with whip and tongue, as fast as they could go. Korovin's guard, the one they had bribed, had told them where the clearing in the forest was.

It seemed hopeless. It was already late afternoon. Many hours had passed since Mark had been taken away. How could a man already sick almost unto death with typhus stay alive that long on a bed of snow in the freezing open air? Nevertheless they refused to give up hope. "Hurry, hurry, hurry! For God's sake, hurry!" Maria kept whispering to Kotov's back. And though he could not hear her words in the rush of wind he could feel them burning into his back, and his tongue and whip were never still.

The tracks made by the truck when it had turned off the road led them to the clearing. They saw the heaps in the rough shape of human bodies scattered about it. All jumped from the sleigh and, separating, hurried through the clearing turning over the bodies and brushing the snow from their faces. The dead men seemed to be protesting at having their peace disturbed; through teeth bared by dropping jaws they stuck out their swollen tongues.

Suddenly there was a cry from Korovin. The other two hurried to his side, certain that he had found Mark's body. It was not Mark, but the body of another officer whom Korovin had seen taken away in the same truck that morning.

Where then was Mark? The two would surely have been thrown down together. Korovin rose and wiped the sweat from his face. Then, looking more closely at the snow, he saw what might be footprints leading in a double line toward the edge of the clearing. He followed the trail. As he went he grew more and more certain that they were the tracks of a man who had walked, dragging one foot after another, through the snow not long before. A few paces further on the man had crossed a fallen tree; it was covered with a thin layer of snow, and in that snow was the clear imprint of a cross pattern. But army boots did not have that pattern on their soles. Korovin halted

again, puzzled. Then he remembered that Mark had been wearing a rubber shoe on one foot.

He followed the trail further. Suddenly he noted that beyond the bushes the tracks were joined by a new line of footprints—not human but animal. He knew of only one sort of animal that could have left such a trail. At the thought he went cold with fear.

The human and the animal tracks turned sharply and then were lost on the icy surface of the road. Which way would Mark have gone? Suddenly he thought of Maria. Of course, that was the way he would go, Korovin decided. He hurried eastward along the road, looking for some sign that would support his idea, and it was not long before he found one—a bit of brown fur on a branch hanging over the road. The bear had come this way, and the bear had been following Mark.

A few minutes later they were once more driving at fast speed along the road toward Borovichi. Did they have more hope, or less?

Night began to fall and the stars came out. The forest shadows turned a deep violet. With all the strength of a terrible desperation Mark forced himself to remain on this side of the blackness into which he knew he would fall the moment he lost consciousness. Now when he stamped his leg on the ground the pain seemed to be greater, but the effect was less. He was bathed in sweat, and unfastened the coat. As the darkness deepened he felt sure that the bear was drawing closer to him, that now it was only a few steps behind. His feet were as heavy as lead; he could hardly move them. At last there came a moment when the pain in his wounded leg became so unbearable that he had to sit down. Once down he could not rise again, and began to struggle forward on hands and knees, tears of despair welling up in his eyes. Sensing that the bear was close behind him he turned on his knees and again waved a threatening fist at it; again the animal fell back.

Now Mark heard a roaring in his ears; his breath came and went short and hard. But again he moved forward, on hands and knees bleeding from ice-cuts. In the end it was a small rise in the road which defeated him. Again and again he tried to get over it, but every time he slipped back. Realizing he could go no further he lay for a mo-

ment face down on the road, saving what little strength he had for the last desperate struggle.

The bear stood for a moment or two, waiting. But the human body did not move. Slowly it approached, and Mark felt the warmth of its breath over his head. Turning on his back and half sitting up he drove his right arm, which he had wrapped in his fur cap, between the jaws of the bear. The bear too was exhausted. Raising its paw it struck him on the chest, but the blow was a feeble one. Mark seized the animal by the head, and together they went rolling over on the road. Slowly the bear got up on its rear legs, dragging Mark up too, and thus they stood for a moment, like two fighters each held by the arms of the other.

But now Mark could fight no longer. His eyes closed. He fell to his knees and rolled over. The bear dropped down beside him, but before it could bury its teeth in his flesh a sleigh drove wildly up and a man leapt out. A long hunter's knife was plunged into the bear below the shoulder. The animal fell back, shook its head as if in protest, and rolled over beside the unconscious Mark. As though settling down more comfortably for its last long rest it moved once or twice, and then was still.

A much older woman, named Vera Pavlova, lived with Maria. While Maria heated a great pot of water Vera stripped Mark's filthy clothes off. Her cry of horror brought Maria running to her side. Before them lay a skeleton with dark skin drawn tightly over it. The knees were swollen and bloody, but the legs seemed to have no muscle or flesh left on them at all; they were two thin, useless sticks. The long skinny arms ended in enormous swollen hands plastered with dried blood. Seeing that bare body Maria threw up her hands and covered her eyes. Then they set to work to drive off the dirt and smells from that long-unwashed body. Together they carried him to the bed.

Mark lay for many days on the border between life and death. In his dream he was a boy again, begging Kornei to let him play with his gun, or shouting while he herded the sheep on the steppe.

"Water," was his first feeble word as he recovered consciousness. He saw a woman's face bent over him. He knew he had seen it before, but he knew also that it belonged to that other world in which a mother was stand-

ing in defense of her children. Then a mist veiled his eyes again and he fell back into a deep sleep.

By the end of another two weeks Mark was well on the way to recovery. The doctor, smiling at Maria, called it a miracle of will-power. Though still unable to leave his bed he was beginning to look more normal. His hands and knees had healed; he was gradually putting on flesh. He was thinking of getting out of bed.

From the moment Mark had begun to get better Maria held herself at a distance. He would not risk opening the conversation he was desperately longing for, and he began to think that even the letter that had crossed the front to reach him in the German rear was only part of a dream.

One day, sitting by his bed, she told him the latest news of the world. In the east the front had come to a standstill, held fast by the winter, and little news came from that area. But on this side of the front a new life was beginning. The Germans weren't greatly interested in what the Russian inhabitants of the occupied areas did. The peasants had put an end to the collective farms and shared out the land among themselves. The workers were returning to their factories. Somehow the people had to obtain food and the necessary supplies for themselves. Further to the west the Germans had set up civil administrations for the occupied areas, but the area around Borovichí was still under military control, and no order whatever had been established. So the people were beginning to set up their own order. One or two shops had opened and market days were being regularly held.

"Isn't it a strange thing?" said Maria. "Under Soviet control everyone felt that he was a hired laborer. People worked as they would for a master. But now they've changed. They've all been seized by a spirit of enterprise. In the villages chickens are being raised in huge quantities. The peasants are buying from the Germans horses that are of no further use for military purposes. Fine new pots and pans are being manufactured out of all the scrap metal that's lying about. What's behind it all, Mark?"

He lay for a long time silent. Then he answered: "The people have found a new hope. They hope the end has come to Stalin's communism. Nobody knows yet what the Germans want or will permit. But the people have persuaded themselves that the Germans will go some day, just as they have come, and then it will be possible to live



both without them and without the Communists too. And so they're beginning to work for their own betterment. Only, you know, I can't help thinking it's all a dream."

Maria sat with her hands resting on her knees. She fixed her large, unsmiling eyes on him. "I love you, Mark."

At last she had spoken the words he was waiting to hear, and although he had long known she would say them, and in just that quiet, simple way, his heart leaped and sang. She had found her way to him in the forest and had breathed life into him, had compelled him to live. From her had come a mighty current of life, and he had felt it filling him with new blood. He had lain in her arms helpless, sick, naked and terrifying. He thought of all the things she had had to do for him. And after all that still she loved him; still she said the words he had been waiting to hear.

Pressing her hand to his cheek he said softly:

"I believe that the measure of love to be allowed a man is fixed at his birth—to one a larger measure, to another a smaller. I have been given the very largest of measures. I love you, Maria."

She rested on his shoulder, and he felt her hot breath on his cheek. "Do you remember that night?" she whispered. "We were younger then; so young that we succeeded in deceiving ourselves for a few moments at least. And it was then that I took on a little part of your pain, and I have borne it within me ever since. We mustn't think we have no right to love, Mark. We are in a terrible time when what is needed is hate, not love, but we'll love too. And we'll hate; for perhaps just love alone would be too little for us in these times."

## Chapter II

### Love and Hate

LOVE AND HATE! IN the weeks and months and years to come Mark was to recall Maria's words again and again.

All his life he had been face to face with something he could not understand, and that something he knew had to do with love and hate.

Everywhere, in this great country of his, there was beauty and the possibility and promise of life—in her fields and forests, in her plains and mountains, in her rivers and lakes, in her summers and winters, in her men and women, in her music and her poetry and her dancing.

And yet everywhere, as he grew from boyhood to manhood, he had seen nothing but poverty and distress, misery and suffering, fear and anger, death and disaster. He who wanted peace so desperately had seen nothing but war; he who longed for the rule of love had experienced nothing but a regime of hate.

Even as he lay there on his sickbed, too weak to move, he could see in his mind's eye the whole of Western Russia as one great flaming destruction—the rich soil scorched by the flames of war and Stalin's barbaric order to destroy everything, towns and villages reduced to heaps of smoking ruins, the people perishing by the million, in one vast confusion of bombs and shells and firing squads and gas-chambers and concentration camps and starvation and disease.

Stalin . . . Hitler . . . Mark had to decide, in common with all those who were with him and around him in body and spirit, which of these two was the greater evil. And which, therefore, had to be fought first. If he could be sure it was Hitler then it would be his duty, when he was himself again, to go back east and help drive out the German invader, even though by so doing he might be helping Stalin to continue and even strengthen his controls. If he could be sure it was Stalin then it would be his duty to assist the German invasion, even though he knew that by so doing he might be helping Hitler to turn Russia into one great German colony.

Mark was not alone in his state of indecision. All around him, in Borovich itself and throughout the occupied area, Russians were asking themselves the same sort of questions. They came to know one another, these men, and they began to discuss and argue. What to do? And then, one day in the spring of 1942, they finally met and made up their minds. The decision was to build up an organization the object of which, first and foremost, would be to fight Stalin and his system by helping Germany to win the war.



ice for our people? For they will realize and remember that we were the first to show the world that Communism and Russia are two different things, and that communism has no more terrible enemy than the Russian people itself."

"Of course; why talk about it?"

Mark straightened his back and lifted his head. Now his gray eyes were smiling happily. Now for the first time he had found a key that could unlock his own spirit. He was serving not today, but the future; he belonged to the future, and all that he did today must be directed to tomorrow. A great weight seemed to have fallen from his shoulders. Confidently, happily, he cried through the smoke-filled air:

"Well, then, if it's all clear, let's begin. We will enlarge our group and take in all who wish to fight for our people and the people's freedom."

Any day the general might change his mind. Or someone might change it for him. It was a gamble with time. Men, many men, had to be enlisted, armed, trained. The organization had to be made bigger, stronger. Every moment was precious; not one could they afford to lose. Mark moved from town to town, from village to village explaining, directing, organizing, endlessly worrying. The force began to take shape. It now had its own companies and regiments, its own officers, its own transport, its own central headquarters, always hidden deep in the heart of some forest where the Germans would never dare to venture.

And side by side with the building of the military force there developed the beginnings of a free Russian civil administration, with its own government groups and committees. Free Russian newspapers began to appear.

How long would this golden opportunity last? Warning that the end was in sight came, strangely enough, from a German. He was a Captain Berger, staff officer to the general in command of the occupation forces in the Borovich area. He had an excellent knowledge of Russian.

"Difficult times are coming," he said to Mark one day. "Political control in the occupied areas will pass into other hands. The army will have no further influence. I'm seriously afraid of those days, Mr. Surov, for I know what our Germany is and what our Fuhrer is aiming at."

Mark was impressed by Berger's sincerity, though he

had no idea why this German officer, a stranger, had risked saying so much to a Russian. But it was a fact that he had already received information that further to the west a German civil administration had been set up, and was treating the Russian population with great cruelty. The news drove Mark and his friends to even greater haste to create a Russian force that would not be easy to crush.

Events now moved at disastrous speed. The German secret police already had their fingers on the pulse of this strange organization that had arisen in the German rear. It was not long before every step taken by Mark and the others was being watched and noted by the men with death's heads on their caps and buttons.

A night arrived when the leaders of the organization realized that the breaking point had come. The Russians now had their own road to travel, and would have to take it however hard it was. That night Mark and Kotov were awakened by a dry, repeated, distant cracking sound which at first they could not make out. Mark went to the window and pulled aside the blanket which they used as a curtain. At once the room was lit up with a bright red glow which deepened the shadows on Mark's face and was reflected in his astonished, puzzled eyes.

Tongues of flame were shooting up to heaven from the direction of the prisoner-of-war camp. The dry cracking sounds were coming from the same quarter.

"They're shooting down the prisoners," Kotov said hoarsely, as he stood at Mark's side. Mark fell back from the window and cried out the words:

"Call out your men!"

No one will ever know what process of thought, developed in what evil brain, led to the massacre of four thousand Russian prisoners in the camp from which Mark himself, as if by a miracle, had been carried out to freedom by his captors.

The plan was simple. First the huge buildings were set on fire by the guards. As panic-stricken prisoners poured out into the yard in a solid, heavy flood, the guards on their watchtowers stood by their machine-guns and opened up an unbroken fire. Not against the prisoners in the yard, because that would have been against international law, but only along the barbed wire barriers, to prevent them from escaping, which was per-

missible. There were eight thousand prisoners in the buildings, but there was room for only four thousand in the yard. Where were the others to go?

Along the barbed wire rose a wall of dead bodies. It reached to the top of the barrier, and the prisoners for whom there was no room in the yard tried to climb up that human wall to reach the other side. Some of them succeeded, only to be shot down by guards waiting for them on the other side, or by others who were patrolling through the streets of the town.

However the German patrols were not the only ones who were in the streets that night. Members of Kotov's free Russian force were also active. It was part of their official duty to keep order in the town. The German patrols knew that Russians with white armbands were the local police who were not to be touched—at least not yet. But why were there so many of them in the street that night? Prisoners who escaped from the camp and avoided the patrols were given white armbands and swallowed up by crowds of Kotov's soldiers. Thus an unseen struggle for the lives of these prisoners went on in the town. Many who were saved were taken across the river under cover of darkness. And thus some hundreds of lives were saved, to strengthen still further the forces of resistance.

This was the turning point. From now on it was to be a war first and foremost against the Germans, using the forces which they themselves had helped to create. And from now on Mark and his fellow-leaders had to go underground, to move about in disguise, always on the alert against possible traitors and spies.

cated in Russia but who had come to hate everything Russian with a savage hatred.

Hitler made Rosenberg ruler of the Russians. By his order the Russian people were to be robbed of everything. The grain, the cattle, everything that was Russian became in effect German property. German officials swarmed through the villages, taking everything they found. Train loads of food and treasures were removed to Germany. Other trains carried Russians off to slave labor.

Now Russians laughed bitterly to think they had ever hoped for liberation at the hands of the Germans. History was repeating itself, but instead of the Communists taking away everything it was the Germans. When the villages refused to give up their food, because they were starving, it was German soldiers who came to shoot down the inhabitants and burn down the houses. When the towns did not obey the order to supply Russians for work in Germany the markets and amusement places would be raided, and those caught were herded like cattle onto trains and shipped not eastward to Siberia but westward to Berlin. But what was the difference?

In the German rear there arose great confusion and sudden death. German trains loaded with precious military materials went rolling down embankments. Adolf Hitler's officers and soldiers perished in railway disasters. There was no safe place for Germans anywhere on Russian soil. And in the German occupation offices, just as before there had been strange stories of the "Waldemanner," so now they talked of a new organization: the "Schwartz Katze."

The Black Cat. Its terrible marks were to be seen everywhere. It attacked German posts at night. It killed German officials. And after every demonstration of its power and anger the Black Cat left behind this warning:

"The Black Cat is defending the people. For every Russian killed a German will be killed."

Among the leaders of the Black Cat organization was Mark Surov.

"The time has come to strike a blow right at the enemy's heart," Mark said. "Then perhaps the Germans will realize that they would do better not to behave like savages on Russian soil."

He sat silent, and the others, too, were silent, deep in

thought. Then someone asked: "Bido?" Mark nodded. "If Bido, the all-powerful German Commissar of the Eastern Areas, were to be wiped out the Germans would understand that they must change their behavior. They would realize that they are in danger from all sides, since even their best-guarded governor could not be saved from destruction."

Soon after this meeting the Black Cat organization met a series of disasters. The Moscow commissars carried through a brilliant operation aimed at smashing the organization with the aid of the Germans. But before doing so they entered into talks with Surov and other leaders offering them Moscow's pardon, an honorable return to the communist fatherland, even rewards in recognition of their "special services." All to no effect. At his last meeting with the secret Soviet representatives Mark told them plainly:

"We've never been so happy as we are now, when we find ourselves between Hitler and Stalin. They're both our enemies; they both have to be fought. We won't hinder you in forming your own forces. But the Black Cat will never become a weapon in Stalin's hands. Our land is vast, and for the present we can go our separate ways without interfering with one another. At the moment we're both fighting the Germans, but tomorrow we shall have to fight you."

When the representatives reported on their failure to take over the Black Cat organization Moscow replied: "Do everything possible to destroy it." That it was fighting the common enemy made no difference to Stalin. Now the Black Cat had to fight on two fronts—it had to deal with Stalin's spies and agents on the one hand and with Hitler's spies and agents on the other. Nevertheless it continued its work. And its chief work now was directed towards the assassination of Bido.

Drobnin, Mark's closest friend among the Black Cat leaders, discovered that a woman was wanted to work in the home of the German Commissar. And Drobnin was persuaded by Maria, in Mark's absence, to allow her to be the "planted" woman. When Mark learned about the plan it was already too late to change her mind; as Olga Prakhina she had succeeded in convincing the officer who had been charged with the search that she was completely uninterested in politics, that she had no family or lovers, and that in all respects she was just the sort of woman



turned to face the town. Mark lowered his hand and stood with his back to Maria, staring in the same direction.

One minute passed. Two minutes.

"Surely nothing has gone wrong!" he exclaimed.

At that moment a sudden sharp light lit up the sky above the town. A second later they heard a distant explosion.

"Maria, my darling! You've done it." He turned and seized her, crushed her in his arms and whispered joyfully:

"Understand? We've done it. A blow right in the enemy's heart. And it was you who struck the blow, Maria, my precious one."

She laughed happily, excitedly, stroked his cheek, pressed against him with her body.

Even before there had been time to pick up the pieces of Commissar Bido and his white dog, Lieutenant Peterson, officer of the guard, took the brown Great Dane to Frau Olga's empty room, held her shoes and linen to its nose and set it on the trail. The lieutenant was raging, for he knew his own life was in danger for failure to guard Bido's, and he knew too that somehow the missing Russian woman must have been responsible for the explosion. He was determined to find her, and if he did . . .

Kotov had made many mistakes in his time, but now he made his last. "We'll sleep a bit first," he said, "spend the day here under cover and move on tomorrow night. We might be seen in the daytime."

Drunk with the success of the plan Mark and Drobnin and the others readily agreed.

Mark too had overlooked one possibility—that of Maria's being followed by the other dog.

Kotov had posted guards only a few hundred yards from the camp, and though these were quick to see the German soldiers approaching and to open fire on them they were overrun in minutes. Before Kotov could realize what was happening the green uniforms of the soldiers were already showing through the trees. They at once opened a murderous fire on the small group of Russians, and in a moment dead and wounded were lying on the ground.

Drobnin, pressing one hand to the streaming wound in Maria's side, tried to drag her away from Mark. But looking into Mark's eyes she clung to him with all her strength,



that one day we will meet again here—in a free Russia.”

As Mark walked away from the station he was overtaken by Korovin. Together they went up a hill. The ruins of the town were left behind. All around them stretched the endless plain that was their homeland. Mark stopped to breathe in the smell of the soil he loved so much, and stood staring out into space.

“What are you looking for?” Korovin finally asked.

“I am looking for a sunrise. I have faith that God will bring forth another sunrise in the east.”

# Glossary

*Note 1: Organization.* What is loosely called "The Army" usually consists, in a large country like Russia, of a number of armies. Each of those is again broken down into a number of smaller groupings. The chief of these are listed below, with a very rough idea of the number of men in each, to show relative size.

Front 750,000 — 1,000,000  
Corps . . . . 45,000 — 56,000  
Division . . 10,000 — 12,000  
Brigade . . . . . 4,000  
Regiment . . . . . 2,500

Battalion . . 600  
Company . . 115  
Platoon . . . 35  
Section . . . . 9

Other groupings are as follows:

*detachment:* A small group (number indefinite) separated from the main body for a short time for some special purpose.

*squad:* Roughly the same as "detachment" but also used more specially for a small group of men under training.

*squadron:* A group of "cavalry" (horse-soldiers) numbering between 120 and 200 men.

Each group (corps, division etc.) has its own central office or base, which is called its headquarters.

*Note 2: Rank.* As a rule there is some relationship between the position or "command" which an officer holds and his rank. The chief ranks, in order of importance, are as follows:

Marshal  
Army General  
Colonel General  
Lieutenant General  
Major-General  
Colonel

Lieutenant-Colonel  
Major  
Captain  
Senior Lieutenant  
Lieutenant  
Junior Second Lieutenant

it, to prevent animals, people, etc. from climbing over or through it.

*bark*: Thick outer skin of a tree.

*bear*: Large, thick-haired, flat-footed animal, dangerous when untamed.

*Bolshevik*: An early name given to the Communists in Russia; therefore, the older Communists.

*cavalry*: Soldiers on horses.

*cell*: A small room, usually for one person only, in prison.

*censure*: Blame or criticize (person) for mistake or wrong act.

*civil war*: A war between people of the same country.

*collective farm*: A government-controlled organization formed by bringing farms of many people together and making them all work on land together.

*commissar*: Head of a government organization.

*comrade*: A form of address of fellow members in a communist society.

*confess*: Admit guilt or mistake or fault (-ion).

*consulate*: An office which a government has in another country, usually in a city other than the capital city.

*convoy*: (1) Go with in order to organize or keep safe from attack; (2) group or force which is convoyed.

*Czar*: Name given Russian emperor, king, etc.

*dazed*: Made half-conscious by blow(s) or shock of some sort.

*desert*: Leave (army, etc.) without permission, with idea of not returning (-er).

*division*: See note 1.

*embrace*: Hold in one's arms, as sign of love.

*estimate*: Form opinion as to the amount, value, quality etc. of something.

*expel*: Put, send, out of association, organization etc., as punishment.

*front*: In war, the field of battle, the line where opposing armies meet.

*fortress*: Building, town with strong walls, guns etc. to protect it against attack.

*G.P.U.*: Russian secret police, later called N.K.V.D.

*gallop*: Ride a horse, etc. at the fastest rate it can go.

- latrine*: Place, especially in camp, for getting rid of waste from body.
- leper*: Person who has leprosy, a disease which slowly eats away the skin.
- lice*: Plural of "louse" a small insect which lives on bodies of men and causes disease.
- lumber*: Trees which have been roughly cut up for building etc. purposes.
- orderly*: A person who does simple work in a hospital usually not medical.
- pardoned*: Forgiven for something wrong one has done.
- patrol*: (Group of soldiers) going around place, town etc. at regular times to keep order or for some other special purpose.
- propaganda*: Organized effort to spread ideas, opinions, beliefs etc.; methods and materials for doing this.
- purge*: Process of getting rid of waste, harmful substances in the body. The political executions were supposed to rid society of poisonous evil-doers, wrong-doers etc.
- regiment*: See note 1.
- reindeer*: (Horned animal of the "deer" family used in the Far North for transport.
- revise*: Go over writing etc. with the idea of changing, improving it.
- revolt*: The act of rising up to fight against the government.
- revolution*: Effort to change the government of a country by use of force by a group in the population of that country. A *revolutionary* is a person who takes part.
- Samurai*: Member of upper, warrior class of old Japan, noted for loyalty, bravery.
- sentimental*: Being over-kind, having foolishly soft feelings. (-ity)
- skis*: Long narrow flat pieces of wood, worn on the feet for travel over snow.
- sleigh*: Carriage on long pieces of metal for traveling over snow, pulled by horses.
- smuggle*: Get thing into or out of place secretly, without permission.
- Soviet (of Deputies)*: Any one of the groups representative of workers in any part of the U.S.S.R.; any of

smaller groups given authority by these; meeting formed of representatives of these from all over U.S.S.R.

*splinter*: A small bit of wood broke off from a larger piece.

*squadron*: See note 1.

*steppe*: Level stretch of land without trees, especially in South Russia.

*stride*: Move with long, even steps.

*stun*: Make unconscious with blow, shock.

*timber*: Wood cut especially for building purposes.

*trench*: A long ditch dug in the earth for protection in war.

*troop(s)*: Group of soldiers, military forces.

*wilderness*: Uncultivated waste-land full of stones or overgrown with trees, plants, etc.

*vodka*: Alcoholic drink made in Russia from a cereal called "rye."

*yard*: Open space outside building, surrounded by walls or rails; space used for special purpose.

